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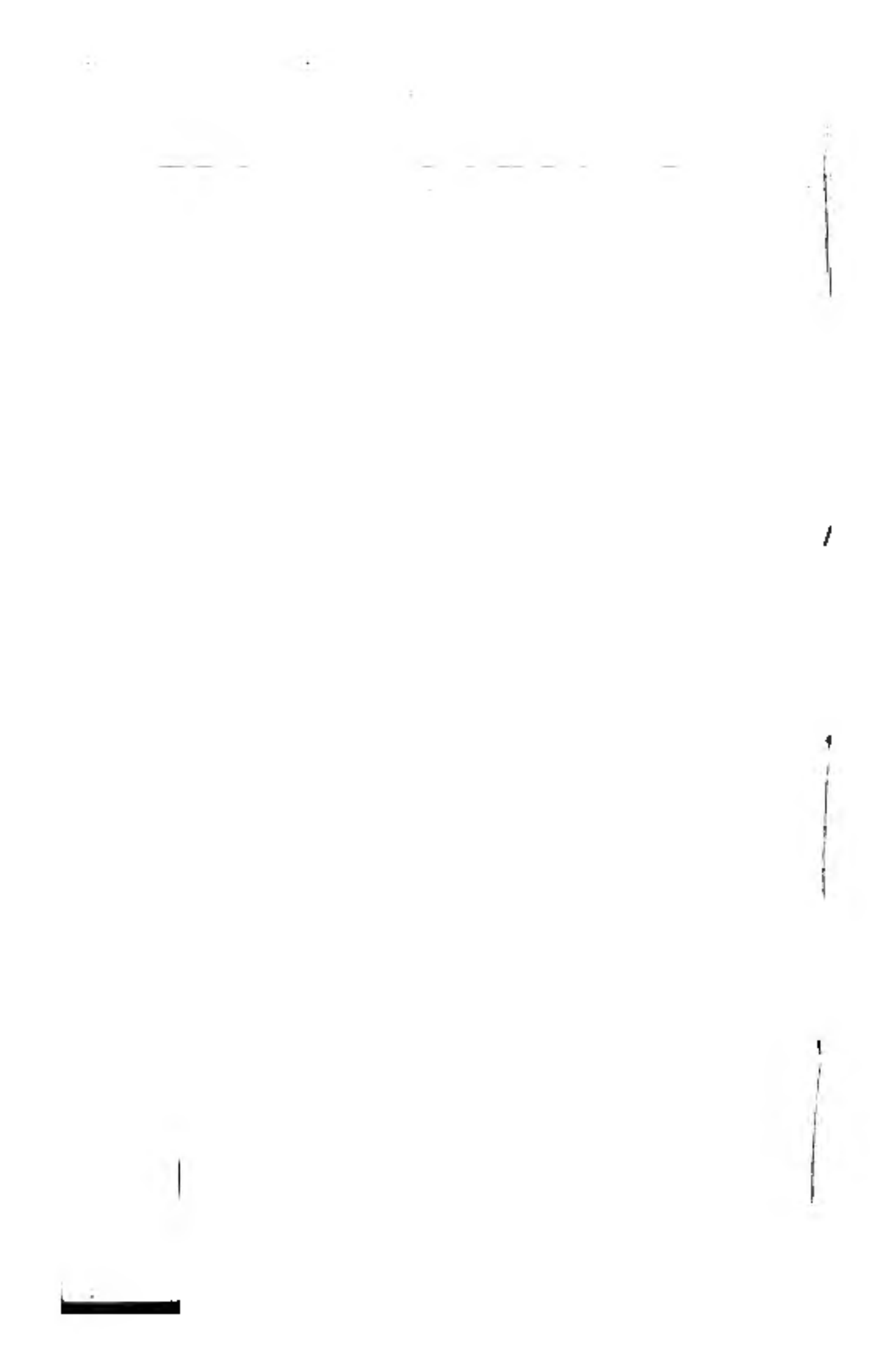
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ELLA OF GARVELOCH.

A Tale.

BY

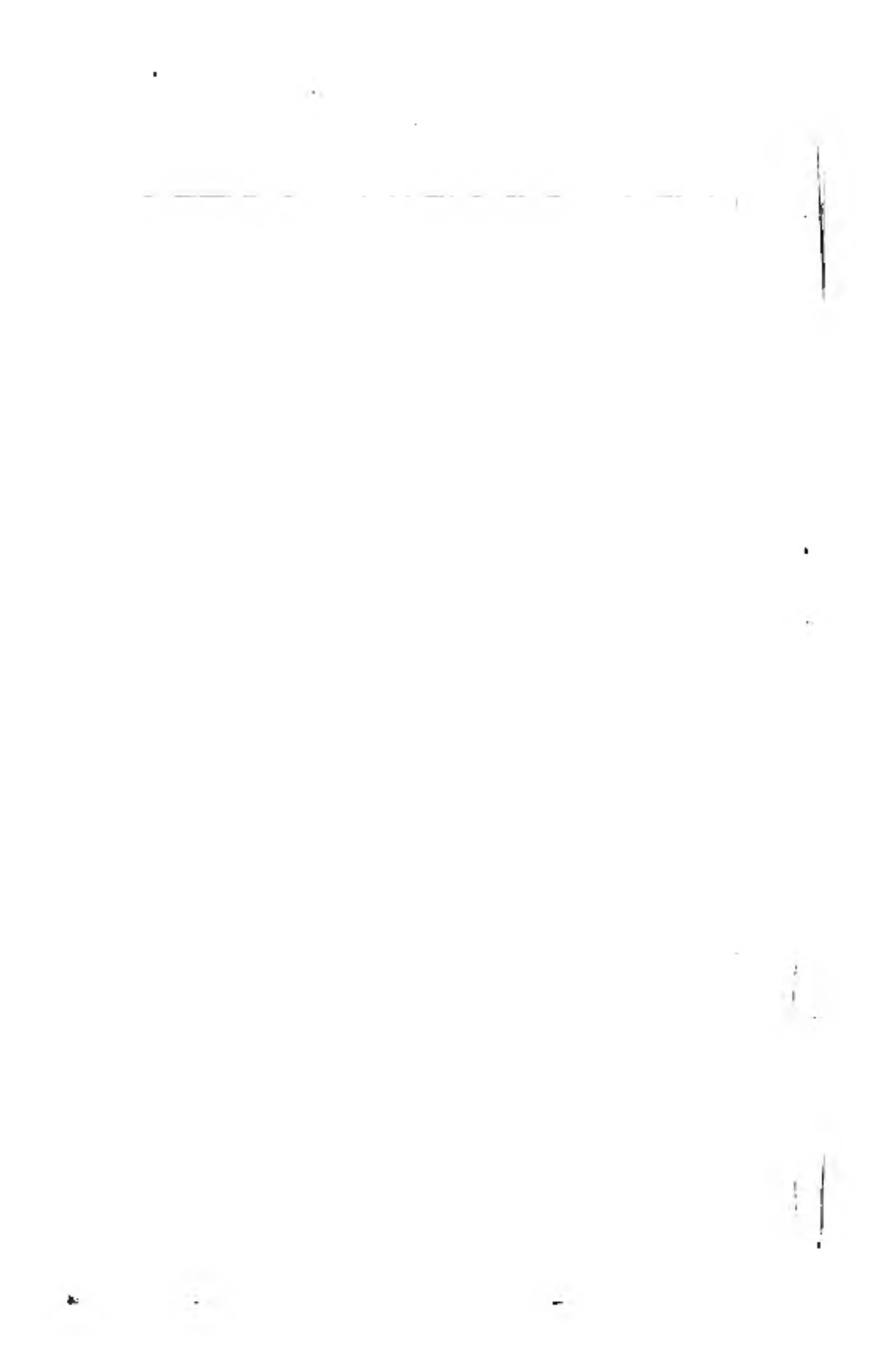
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THIRD EDITION.

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LONDON :

**PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford-street.**

Parsons Lib

The Author must acknowledge herself indebted for much valuable information on the subject of this volume to Dr. Macculloch's Description of the Western Islands of Scotland.

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ELLA OF GARVELOCH.

CHAPTER I.

LANDLORD AND TENANT.

Among the islands which are clustered around the western shore of Argyleshire, there is a small chain called the Garveloch Isles, or the Isles of Rough Rock. There are four of them, divided from the coast of Lorn by a tossing sea, and by scattered islands larger than themselves; and from each other by narrow sounds, studded with rocks, and difficult to navigate, on account of the force of their currents. This difficulty would have placed the inhabitants nearly out of reach of intercourse with those of the mainland, even if that intercourse had been desired by either party; but it was not, at the date of our narrative, for they knew and cared little about each other. The islanders, consisting of only a few families scattered over Garveloch, (the principal of the group, which therefore gives it name to the whole,) thought of nothing but providing as they could for themselves alone; and their place

of habitation was so wild and dreary that it presented no attractions to visitors. Garveloch was the only inhabited island of the four; Ila-chanu, the westernmost and next largest, being a desert of rocks and moorland; and the easternmost, considerably smaller, not having even yet received the poor distinction of a name.

The length of Garveloch is about a mile and a half; but its dwellers were, in the days of our tale, as little acquainted with each other's concerns as if a chain of mountains had divided the north-eastern from the south-western parts of their island. The difficulties which lay in the way of their intercourse were so great from the nature of the land,—it being divided by steep rocks into cliffs and narrow valleys which were almost impassable,—that the rare communication which did take place was by coasting when the weather was calm enough to render the Sound safe for the crazy boats and small skill of the islanders. These boats were but two; one belonging to a farmer who cultivated his sandy fields on the southernmost and sunniest part of the land, and the other to the family of a fisherman who had tenanted a good cottage and croft on the shore some way higher up. These boats were borrowed as they were wanted; and the intercourse of lending and receiving back again was all that ever took place, except on the rare occasions of a marriage, a birth, or a funeral, or the still rarer one of a visit from the proprietor. These visits averaged about one in the lifetime of each laird; for if it chanced that any one of the race

was so fond of the wildest kind of scenery, or so addicted to any pursuit in which the productions of these islands could assist him, as to show his face a second time to his amazed tenantry, it as often happened that another was kept away entirely by the reports of those who had no love of dreary lands and perilous waters.

There are traces in all the islands of times when they had been more frequented; of times when the first introduction of a new faith into this remote region was followed up by rites which must have given to it an aspect of civilization which it had now long lost. Tombs of gray stone, with a cross at the head of each, are conspicuous here and there; and in the most secluded parts are mouldering walls which seem to have formed hermitages in the olden times. If these establishments were, as is most probable, connected with the cathedral of Iona, it seems strange that so great a celebrity as they must have obtained should have died away. There is not so much as one tradition, however obscure, among the inhabitants, respecting these relics, and they therefore afford the less interest to the traveller, who can only look at the remains and go away as wise as he came.

There was once a laird, however, who was not willing to give up the whole matter as a mystery without examination. He came again and again, sometimes attended only by his steward, and sometimes by strangers as curious as himself. He destroyed the average we have spoken of, greatly to the joy of his island tenantry, and to

the annoyance of the old steward who had the charge of this range of islands, together with many more in the neighbouring seas, and who much preferred talking big in the name of the laird, and doing what he pleased among the people, to following his principal in his excursions, standing by to hear the statements of the tenantry, and receiving directions concerning their affairs.

Notice of a visit from the laird was sometimes given and sometimes not, according as Callum, the steward, happened to be in Garveloch or elsewhere. He had an apartment of his own at the farm above-mentioned, which he occupied sometimes for a few days together, and which was therefore better furnished with accommodations than any other space between four walls in the island. The convenience of having this apartment prepared in case of the weather being too boisterous to permit a return on the same day to the mainland, induced the proprietor to send notice when Callum was on the spot to make arrangements. When he was not, such notice served no purpose, as the people at the farm had no power to levy supplies, and would not have known how to use them when procured, so uncivilized were their habits and manners. On one occasion, the omission of such notice caused the laird to witness a sight which he had never before beheld in all its simplicity,—a funeral among his tenants.

As the bark which contained himself and a party of friends approached Garveloch, one fine

spring morning, he saw two boats nearing the landing-place before them. As these vessels were rocked in the surf, snatches of a hoarse and wild music came from them, rising above the roar and dash of the waves. The sound was not that of any instrument, but of the rough voices of men, and it ceased when the labours of landing began. This was done with all possible awkwardness, confusion and noise, and then the companies of the two boats took their way up the rocks without perceiving the laird's vessel, which was still at a considerable distance. Some of the men bore on their shoulders the body about to be interred, and the rest followed at their own pace, not forming themselves into any order of march, or seeming to be united by any common object. The last of the stragglers disappeared behind a projection of the rock, while the laird was preparing to be carried through the surf by two of his boatmen. He pointed out to them, with great exactness, the spot where they should land the rest of the party when they should return from Ilachanu to join him at dinner, and then took his way alone in the track of the funeral party.

He reached the burying-ground just as the ceremony was concluded; for funerals in the Highlands are hurried over with an apparent negligence and levity which shock the feelings of those who have been accustomed to the solemnity which such a service seems fitted to inspire. The only solemnity here arose from the desolation of the place. It was unenclosed, so that the wild cattle had gone over it, defacing the tomb-

stones and cropping the coarse herbage which grew more plentifully here than elsewhere. Thistles and docks appeared where there were some traces of a path, and the fragments of broken crosses lay as rubbish beside the newly-dug grave. The laird looked among the group for the mourners. They were easily distinguished by their countenances, though they shed no tears and spoke no word. They were three boys, the two elder of whom were strong, ruddy, well-grown youths, apparently of the ages of sixteen and fourteen. The third was either some years younger, or was made to look so by his smallness of size and delicacy of appearance. He fixed the attention of the laird at once by the signs of peculiarity about him. His restlessness of eye and of manner was unlike that which arises in children from animal spirits, and contrasted strangely with the lost and melancholy expression of his countenance. His brothers seemed not to forget him for a moment, sometimes holding him by the hand to prevent his wandering from them, sometimes passing an arm round his neck to control his restlessness, sometimes speaking to him in the caressing tone which they would use to an infant. The laird, learning from some who passed out of the burying-ground that these boys were orphans, and had been attending the funeral of their father, determined to learn more about them from themselves.

“ You three are brothers, I find. Which of you is the eldest ? ”

"I am two years older than Fergus," answered Ronald, "and Archie is twelve, though he looks less."

"And have you any brothers and sisters younger than you, Archie?" enquired the laird.

Archie looked in the gentleman's face for a moment, and then away again.

"He speaks to nobody but us," said Ronald. "He heeds no other voice,—that is, no man's or woman's voice. He knows the low of the cattle and the cry of the sea-fowl when a storm is coming. He wants to be down among the rocks now, ye see. We're going, Archie, we're going. Stay a minute.—He's not like us, your honour sees."

"I see, I see. He looks quite lost."

"To a stranger," said Fergus, "but not to us. We know his ways so well that we can always guide him, except when he is at the highest and lowest, and then it is best to leave him to himself till the fit is over."

"He must require a great deal of watching; is there no one to take care of him but you?"

"He takes to no folly, only to sport, Sir; and he is wiser than we about many things, and sees farther. He is always housed before a tempest, or safe in a hole in the rock, like the birds he seems to learn from, while we breast the wind as we may, far from home. When he is dull or low, Ella takes better care of him than we could do. She just puts fresh heather under him and sings, and he sleeps sometimes many days together."

"And who is Ella?"

"Our sister, your honour; our elder sister. She is down by the boats, and she will be glad to see your honour, for we have much to say to you or to Mr. Callum. Where will your honour please to see Ella?"

"We will walk down to the boats, Ronald; or, if your sister should wish to speak with me more privately, perhaps she will come up here."

Ronald cast a hurried look at the new-made grave, and then said to Fergus,

"Run down, Fergus, and ask Ella to come up to the cross yonder. The laird will wait for her there: and let Archie go with you; he is in a hurry for the shore."

During the few minutes that they waited at the cairn or heap of stones in which the cross was planted, the laird learned from his companion something of the domestic circumstances of this orphan family. Their mother had died at Archie's birth, and their father had been growing infirm for many years, so that almost the whole charge of the family had rested upon Ella since she had been old enough to support it. Her brother praised her only by stating facts; but these facts conveyed an impression that she must be a woman of extraordinary energy, and one who deserved all the respect and love with which her brothers could regard her. It was very natural that, while listening to a tale of peculiar interest concerning her, the laird should picture her to himself as corresponding in outward appearance to the elevated idea which was

given him of her character; and it was with some disappointment that he looked upon her for the first time. She appeared as much older than she really was, as Archie looked younger. She might have been taken for his mother, though she was, in fact, no more than five-and-twenty. Tall and gaunt in person, and thinking as little of adornment in dress as her country-women in general, on ordinary occasions, there was nothing at first sight to attract a stranger. Her feet were bare, according to the universal custom; her hair, unconfined by any cap, hanging down from under the plaid which she had drawn over her head, the plaid itself strapped round her in preparation for rowing her boat home, she looked so unlike the maidens of a civilized country, that the laird, well as he knew his own tenantry, was startled. When he looked again, however, and observed the strong expression of her eye, and of her weather-stained features, when he remembered what toils she had undergone, and that her heart was now troubled and striving with natural grief, he felt that he was wrong in expecting softness where it was not to be found.

“Have you anything to say to me, Ella; any complaint to make?”

“No complaint, your honour. Murmurs will not heal the grief of this day, and other troubles are nothing. I only wished to speak to your honour about the lads and myself; how we are to live and what to do.”

“Well; have you settled what you wish? and

is there difficulty with Callum, or any body else?"

"Your honour knows our farm, where we have lived till now. Mr. Callum has given notice whenever he found my father ill, that we must quit it at his death. So we are going to quit."

"And what else would you do? Your brothers are not old enough to manage a farm."

"Mr. Callum is right, doubtless; and I have no desire to keep on what we could not keep up. As for where we are to go,—we should be quite easy in mind, if your honour would order the place down below to be made weather-tight for us, and fix a rent upon it. Your honour would not ask more than we could pay."

"What, that half-ruined cottage in the bay, with the croft behind it! How could you live there? There is not a fence complete, and not an ear of barley has grown there these many years."

"Your honour would have the fences mended at the same time with the cottage; and there is the fishing to depend on, as well as the ground, and the rocks shelve conveniently there for the weed, and Ronald could sell kelp when I sell fish; and Fergus could bring us in peat,—and as for Archie, the nearer the sea, the happier he is. So I hope your honour will let us try the place."

"It is a wretched place, Ella. I think we might find something better for you. There are patches of richer soil in the vallies. Surely

you had better settle in a more sheltered situation. The wind will blow away your soil and seed together before it has time to strike root."

"We cannot get out of sight of the sea, on Archie's account, sir."

"He would never be happy between green hills," added Fergus. "We should ever be missing him from home, and finding him in the old places: but if we settle on the beach, he will not be tempted to stray."

"Though he could not stray very far, your honour, I am easier to have him under my eye, which might be, if I lived by fishing."

"That is scarcely a woman's business, Ella. It brings toil and hardship to the strongest men."

"It is my business, your honour; and it is not the blackest night, nor the stormiest day, that can weary me, thanks to Him that gives strength where it is wanted. Would you be pleased to grant me what I ask, and let me know with your own lips, what the rent shall be?"

"Let us go to the place, and see what it looks like."

While they proceeded down the steep to the beach, Ella leading the way, the laird marked her stern demeanour and masculine gait, and could not fancy her singing her idiot brother to sleep, and couching him on fresh heather. Presently, however, his idea of her was amended. Archie came sauntering along the shore to join them, and yet with every appearance of not observing them. He held a bunch of sea-bird's feathers, which he thrust into Ella's hand without looking

at her, but glanced back when he had passed, as if to see what had become of them. Ella had thrown back the plaid and stuck them in her hair, where they remained till he was out of sight, when she threw them away and resumed her plaid.

“The people at the farm are relations of yours, I think, Ella?”

“They are fourth cousins of my mother’s; and disposed to be kind to us for her sake: and that is another reason for our settling here.”

“But what will they think of such a dreary place in comparison with their barley and oat fields, to say nothing of the house, with two rooms, each as large as this cottage, besides Callum’s apartment?”

‘It is what we think that matters most.’

“Very true. Now show me the boundaries that you would mark out if you had your choice.”

“The rent will mark the boundary best: but we should like, besides this field, to have the slope of the hill behind for our pony to graze on. We must have the pony to carry the weed, and to draw the harrow, in case of my being out at sea at the time. And I should like to take in a corner of the peat moss yonder; that is all we wish for behind. Then Ronald must be free to cut weed some way along these ledges to the left: they shelve better than those on the other hand. Then the cottage should be new roofed, and the fence put up; and your honour will name the rent.”

“You shall not be pressed for that, Ella. It would not be reasonable in a situation like this.”

"I hope your honour sees we beg no favour," replied Ella. "Ask Mr. Callum, and he will tell you our rent has ever been ready, whether we feasted or fasted: and ready it shall be, if it be God's will to let the sea and land yield us their own."

"Better to fast and pay, than feast and owe," said Fergus.

"Right, very right, Fergus. Well; you shall have your way; and I will consult with Callum about the rent, and have the place made ready as quickly as possible. Here he is. Let one of the lads come up to me at the farm, an hour or two hence, and I will name the rent; meantime, you can join your friends."

Instead of going towards the boats, however, Ella slowly proceeded up the rocks, in the direction of the burying-ground. The lads looked as if they would fain have stayed to listen; but a glance from their sister sent Fergus to look for Archie, and Ronald to join the little funeral party, who were carousing as if it had been a wedding.

"There will be tears in those eyes within these few minutes, if there is nobody nigh," said Callum, looking after Ella as he came up. "They have held tears, for as dry as they seem. Since her father began to fail, I, for one, have seen heart-drops, though she would have had me think it was but the wintry wind."

"She has a proud spirit, Callum."

"Proud! her pride ill becomes one that lives under your honour, and it is more than I know

how to master. There is no bringing her down ; and if she puts her spirit into her brothers, they will be beyond my reach quite."

"How do you mean, Callum ? Why should you bring them down ?"

"Only to make them like others that live under such as you,—grateful and humble, and ready to obey."

"To obey your pleasure, I suppose. No Callum, there has been far too much servile obedience among the lower orders of our people, one sign of which is their revengeful and turbulent temper. If they were less ready to watch our pleasure in matters that do not concern them, they would do fewer deeds that call for revenge, and have fewer causes of quarrel. This proud woman, as we call her, has a peaceable temper, I hope and believe ?"

"Peaceable enough, your honour, or I own I should have picked a quarrel with her before now, for I do not like her any more than I fancy she likes me. But there has never been occasion for any words ; for out comes the pouch as sure as I show myself to gather the rent ; and there is the dinner and the whiskey on the table for me to take or leave, as I like. She never kept me waiting, or stinted her hospitality, or got into a quarrel with her neighbours that I could take hold of."

"Then for what, in the name of wonder, Callum, would you have her be grateful and ready to obey ? I never did her any service that I am

aware of, (though I hope to do some yet,) and I know of no title to her obedience that either you or I can urge. Can you tell me of any?"

Callum stared, while he asked if one party was not landlord and the other tenant.

"You are full of our Scotch prejudices, I see, Callum, as I was once. Only go into England, and you will see that landlord and tenant are not master and slave, as we in the Highlands have ever been apt to think. In my opinion, their connexion stands thus,—and I tell it you, that you may take care not to exact an obedience which I am far from wishing to claim from my tenants,—the owner and occupier of a farm, or other estate, both wish to make gain, and for this purpose unite their resources. He who possesses land wishes to profit by it without the trouble of cultivating it himself; he who would occupy has money, but no land to lay it out upon, so he pays money for the use of the land, and more money for the labour which is to till it (unless he supplies the labour himself). His tillage should restore him his money with gain. Now why should the notion of obedience enter into a contract like this?"

"I only know," replied Callum, "that in my young days, if the laird held up a finger, any one of his people who had offended him would have been thrown into the sea."

"Such tyranny, Callum, had nothing to do with their connexion as landlord and tenant, but only with their relation as chieftain and follower. You have been at Glasgow, I think?"

“ Yes; a cousin of mine is a master in the shawl-manufacture there.”

“ Well; he has labourers in his employment there, and they are not his slaves, are they?”

“ Not they; for they sometimes throw up their work when he wants them most.”

“ And does he hold his warehouse by lease, or purchase?”

“ He rents it of Bailie Billie, as they call him, who is so fierce on the other side of politics.”

“ If your cousin does not obey his landlord in political matters, (for I know how he has spoken at public meetings,) why should you expect my tenants to obey me, or rather you—for I never ask their obedience? The Glasgow operative, and the Glasgow capitalist, make a contract for their mutual advantage; and if they want further help, they call in another capitalist to afford them the use of a warehouse which he lets for his own advantage. Such a mutual compact I wish to establish with my people here. Each man of them is usually a capitalist and labourer in one, and, in order to make their resources productive, I, a landholder, step in as a third party to the production required; and if we each fulfil our contract, we are all on equal terms. I wish you would make my people understand this; and I require of you, Callum, to act upon it yourself.”

The steward made no reply, but stood thinking how much better notions of dignity the old laird had, and how much power he possessed over the lives and properties of his tenants.

“ Did this croft pay any rent before it was let out of cultivation ?” enquired the laird.

“ No, your honour ; it only just answered to the tenant to till it, and left nothing over for rent ; but we had our advantage in it too ; for then yon barley-field paid a little rent ; but since this has been let down, that field has never done more than pay the tillage. But we shall have rent from it again when the lease is renewed, if Ella makes what I expect she will make of this croft.”

“ Is there any kelp prepared hereabouts, Callum ?”

“ Not any ; and indeed there is no situation so fit for it as this that Ronald is to have. There is nothing doing in Garveloch that pays us anything, except at the farm.”

“ Well, then, Ella can, of course, pay nothing at first but for the use of the cottage, and the benefit of the fences, &c. Is there any other capital laid out here ?”

“ Let us see. She has a boat of her own, and the boys will bring their utensils with them. I believe, sir, the house and fence will be all.”

“ Very well : then calculate exactly what they are worth, and what more must be laid out to put them in good condition, and tell me ; the interest of that much capital is all that Ella must pay, till we see what the bay and the little field will produce.”

The laird next gave particular directions what repairs should be made, and that there should be no delay in completing them, and then left Callum to make his estimate, bidding him follow to the farm when he had done. c 8

CHAPTER II.

A HIGHLAND FARM.

THERE was such a bustle at the farm as had not been seen for many a day. At the first alarm of company landing, the girls of the family unyoked themselves from the harrow which they were drawing over the light, sandy soil, and hastened into the house, where their mother had already begun her preparations. One of them set about fanning the smouldering peat fire with the torn skirt of her woollen petticoat, while the other climbed upon the settle to take down one of the regiment of smoked geese which hung overhead from a pole, in somewhat the same kind of arrangement in which they had once winged their flight through the upper air. Lean, black, and coarse, the bird would have been little tempting to the appetite of a stranger; but as all the approaching company were not strangers, it stood a fair chance of being eaten with relish. The mother, while calling to one or another to bring out a cheese from the press, and barley-cakes from the cupboard, was now engaged in bringing potatoes to light from under her own bed, and taking off the cream from pans which were hidden from common observation by a curtain of peat-smoke.

The goose being set to boil, and the potatoes ready to be put into the same pot in due time,

(possibly in order that the oil from the bird might save the trouble of buttering them when they came to table,) the readiest of the two maidens hastened to exhibit the snow-white cloth of ancient home manufacture, which covered, on rare festivals, the table in Callum's apartment. By the time it was spread out to view, it displayed, besides all its varieties of pattern, a further diversity, not intended by the original designer. Here a streak of yellow oil imbibed from the goose; there a brush of mould from a potatoe; here a few harmless drops of cream, and there a corner dabbled in more fragrant whisky, were all new for the occasion. The next thing to be done, was to unpack the baskets of provisions which, out of consideration for the stomachs of the strangers, had been sent in the boat by the laird's housekeeper. What jostling of helpers, what jingling of bottles, what spilling of everything that could be spilt, what soiling of all that was solid! It was well for those who were to eat, that they saw nothing of this household preparation; if they had, neither the fresh sea-breeze, nor the exercise they had taken, would have availed to give a relish to their meal. To beguile the impatience they began to feel for their dinner, some surveyed the farm, some seated themselves on a bench beside the door, to regale their eyes with the splendid view of sea and islands which presented itself: and these occasionally conversed with the farmer's sons,—two boys, who stood staring at a little distance, and were, after much perseverance, prevailed upon to speak.

"What is your name?" asked a lady of the younger boy.

He put three fingers in his mouth and stared, but made no reply; and it was some minutes before it appeared that his name was Rob.

"Well; now you have told me your own name, tell me the name of that island, that looks so black with the shadow of the cloud upon it."

"That's Ilachanu."

"No, no. Ilachanu lies the other way, and we have just come from it. Use your eyes, my man. How should you know which I mean if you stand with your back to it?"

"It's Garveloch, maybe."

"Nay; this is Garveloch that we stand upon. One would think it had no name, by the little you know about it."

"It has not any name," cried the boy brightening.

"Well; why could not you say so before? Do you ever go there?"

"I have been there."

"What do you go there for?"

"Father takes me in the boat."

"And what do you do when you get there?"

"We go and then we come back again."

"I suppose so: but do you fish, or get eggs, or visit your friends, or what?"

Rob laughed, stared, and then looked at his brother, who conveyed with some trouble that nobody lived there. The lady next tried to make something of him.

"What do you go to that desert island for, my lad?"

“Why was you wanting to know?”

“Only out of curiosity. If your errand there is a secret, say so, and I will not ask you.”

The boy laughed, and said they went sometimes for one thing and sometimes for another; and this was all that could be made out.—What was the distance? was the next question.

“It may be twelve mile.”

“Twelve! it cannot be so much surely.”

“Maybe ’tis five.”

“I do not believe it is more than two.

“Indeed, I’m thinking ye’re right.”

“You do not seem to know much about the matter.”

“Indeed, I know nothing about it.”

And so forth, upon every subject started: nor did their father appear much more enlightened in his way.

“The cattle seem to have done your field a world of mischief,” observed an English gentleman, “and no wonder, with such a pretence of a fence as that. How long has it been broken down?”

“Indeed I can’t remember.”

“Not this year, or last,” said his landlord, “for I remember advising you three seasons ago to make your boys clear the ground of these stones, which would have built up your wall presently.—You said you would, and I suppose you still mean to do it some day.”

“O aye, some day; and I have spoken to the lads many a time.”

“Speaking does not seem to have done much good.”

"Indeed, your honour's right."

"Set about it yourself, I advise you, and then perhaps they will work with you, if you can't prevail upon them by other means."

"Maybe I will some day."

"I see no stock except a shaggy pony or two, or the few black cattle on the moor there," observed the English gentleman.

"There are both pigs and poultry, if you could find out where they are," said the laird laughing.

The gentleman looked round in vain, and then applied to farmer Murdoch himself.

"Do ye think we've no more cattle than them?" asked he proudly. "There are many more of the kind down below fishing."

"Cattle fishing! What do you mean?"

"I just mean what I say,—the kine are getting fish for themselves in the pools below, and the pigs——"

The laird explained to his friend that all domestic animals, even horses, relish fish when their other food is poor of its kind; and that it is the custom of the native cattle to go down to the beach at low water, and help themselves out of the pools in which fish have been left by the retiring tide.

"Well, Murdoch; and your pigs and poultry, —where are they? Do your pigs live on wild ducks, and your fowls on sea-weed?"

"Na, na," said Murdoch. "Where should they be but yonder? Ye'll see them when ye go in to dinner."

"What! in the house?"

“To be sure,” said the laird. “As soon as you enter, the pig will run between your legs, and the fowls will perch upon each shoulder, and then you will be asked where the poor beasts could be better. If ever accident should oblige you to sleep in a farm-house hereabouts, examine your bed lest a sucking-pig should have taken possession before you, and in the morning, look for eggs in your shoes before you slip your feet into them.—But see, you must make acquaintance with these domestics out of doors for once. Here comes the old grunter, and there are the fowls fluttering as if they liked the day-light no better than bats.”

In honour of the guests, the house was cleared of live stock, and their banishment was a sign that dinner was ready at last.—The meal was conducted with tolerable decency, as in addition to the boatmen who waited on the guests, Calum had arrived to keep things in order, and do the honours of his apartment. By dint of swearing at one, flinging his Highland bonnet at another, and coaxing a third, he procured a change of trenchers, when his guests turned from fish to fowl, and thence to cheese. This change did not much matter to those who ate of the provisions of the farm-house, for everything had a smack of the sea. The cream was fishy, the cheese was fishy, and the barley bannocks themselves had a salt and bitter flavour as if they had been dipped in sea-water; so at least the English gentlemen thought, remembering how the cattle fed, and having seen the land manured

with sea-weed. As it was certainly pure fancy as far as the barley-cakes were concerned, it might have been so in the other cases; but he turned with much greater relish to the provisions which had been brought from the mainland.

Ella arrived before the meal was over, and waited outside till the laird could speak with her. His first question, when he took his seat on the bench beside the door, and his tenant stood before him, was, what had made her brothers so unlike the boys within, and most of the other lads belonging to the islands? He knew that they had been early taught industry by their father's example; but who had instructed them to husband that industry, to make use of eyes, ears, and understanding as well as limbs? Who had made them intelligent and skilful as well as laborious?

"How does your honour know they are so?" asked Ella, for once following the Highland fashion of answering one question by another.

"I saw at a glance that they were intelligent, and Ronald told me enough while we were waiting for you to show that you know better how to live with a little than these cousins of yours with much. How did you all learn?"

"Did Ronald tell you about Angus?" asked Ella, her eye for the first time sinking under that of the laird.

"Merely that Angus taught you the management of a boat, as he had learned it in dangerous places abroad. Angus is a relation, I suppose, or only a friend?"

“ A friend ; and he taught us all many things that are little thought of here. My father ever said we should do well if we had Angus at hand to advise us.”

“ I suppose he will come and advise you again, Ella, at such an important time as this. Will you not send for him ? Can I carry any message to the mainland, for I hear that it was from over the water that he used to come.”

Ella answered in a somewhat stern voice, that if ever he came again it must be from over the water, for that he had been in foreign parts for five years, and nothing had been heard of him for long.

“ Five years ! then he could not have taught her brothers much, so young as they must have been when he went away.” Ella replied that he taught her whatever her father could not, and her brothers learned of her.

“ Perhaps,” said the laird, “ if his friends expected to hear of him, something prevented his sending to them.”

“ No doubt,” replied Ella.

“ What do you imagine it could be, Ella ?

“ Perhaps he is dead,” said she quietly, but still looking on the ground.

“ You do not suppose he has forgotten his old friends ? yet, such things do sometimes happen, Ella.”

She made no answer ; and the laird saw by the deep colour which made itself seen through her weather-worn complexion, that he had gone too far. He was very sorry ; and now wondered at

his own slowness in perceiving the true state of the case ; but there was so little in her appearance to suggest the idea, and she seemed so wholly devoted to her brothers, that he had fancied the connexion with Angus one of pure friendship,—of that friendship which bears in the Highlands a character of warmth, simplicity, and familiarity, not very common in some other places.

“ To relieve Ella, the laird spoke immediately of business, relating what was to be done to make the cottage and field tenantable, and explaining to her that, twenty shillings a year being the interest upon the capital laid out, twenty shillings a year was the sum he would take, if she thought she could pay it.—Ella had no doubt of it.

“ Try it for a year,” said the laird, “ and then if either party is discontented, we can change our terms. I hope you will meet with no disturbance from any one, and that you may find all your little plans answer well, so that you may be able to pay rent whenever the time comes for neighbours to settle down beside you and increase the cost of the place you hold. That time will come, I give you warning ; and when it comes, I hope you will be rich enough to meet it.”

“ Surely, your honour, we hope to improve the land, and so to be able to pay more than for the fencing ; but how are we to improve the sea, or the ledges where we cut weed ? ”

“ You cannot improve them, Ella ; but if you

are in a more favourable situation than your neighbours for obtaining their produce, you must expect to pay for the advantage. If I were to ask a rent to-day for the fishing in your bay, neither you nor others would pay it ; you would say ' I will go to some other situation as good, where there is no rent to pay,' and you would settle yourself down in Ilachanu or elsewhere, and keep all you could obtain. But when all these best situations are taken possession of, other comers say to me, ' We will pay you a part of what we get if you will let us have a line of shore that shelves conveniently for our kelping, or where fish is plentiful.' "

" And then," said Ella, " we must pay as much as they offer, if we mean to stay ; or take up with a worse situation if we will not pay. Well ; I doubt not we can pay your honour duly when that time comes, over and above the twenty shillings for the house and fences. It may be in fish or kelp, instead of money, but we will manage to pay, if Mr Callum be not hard upon us."

" I shall tell Callum to receive my interest in any shape that it may suit you best to pay it ; in fish, or in kelp, or in grain, or even in peat. This is but fair considering how far you are from any market. As for the real rent, do not trouble your head about that at present. It will be long before you will be called on for any ; and I only mentioned it to show you what you have to expect if you grow rich."

" Will our growing rich make us liable to pay what your honour calls real rent ? You will ex-

cuse my asking, but I like to know what is before us."

"Your growing rich will tempt people to come and try their fortune; and then, as I said, the best situations must pay for being the best. Is not this fair?"

"To be sure; your honour would not ask any thing unfair."

"That is not enough, Ella. If there should be a new laird by that time—"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Ella. "A new laird would not come to Garveloch in this way, like your honour, or listen to what your people have to say."

"But answer me," said the laird, smiling, "Would you object to pay rent, in the case I speak of, whoever might be laird?"

"Surely no;" replied Ella, "unless I could better myself by moving; which I could not do if all situations as good as my own were taken up."

"And how much would you be willing to pay?"

"Let's see. If we had over and above, at the end of the year, two barrels of herrings and half a ton of kelp, we'll say,—I would find out how much we should have over and above, in the same time, in the next best place; and if it was one barrel of herrings and a quarter of a ton of kelp, I would pay the difference,—that is one barrel of herrings and a quarter of a ton of kelp, rather than move.

"Very right; and then you would be as well off in the one place as in the other. There would still be a fair profit on both."

“ And I am sure your honour would not ask more than our profits would come to.”

“ There would be little use in my asking, even if I wished it, Ella ; for it would not be paid. Your neighbour would not settle beside you, unless the place answered to him ; and if I demanded more of you than the difference between your profits and his, you would, of course, move to a situation like his ?”

“ I should be sorry to move,” said Ella, looking downwards to her new place of abode, “ but, in such a case, I must.”

“ Such a case will not occur, Ella ; for we are not so foolish as to let our farms and cottages stand empty from our asking more rent than they can pay.”

“ I am not afraid, sir, of having to give up our place. Whenever there is a rent, it will be small at first, I suppose ?”

“ Yes, and it will grow very slowly in a wild place like this, and it may be years before it bears any at all. In the meanwhile, tell your brothers what I have been telling you.”

Ella promised and then proceeded to the one thing more she had to say. It was a request on Archie's behalf,—a petition that he might amuse himself as he pleased upon the Storr, a high rock, formed like a pyramid, that stood out from one point in the bay in which Ella's cottage stood. This rock was an island at high water, being joined to Garveloch only by a strip of sand, which was overflowed twice every day. Myriads of sea-birds haunted this rock ; and Archie hav-

ing once found his way to these, his favourite companions, could not, his sister believed, be kept from going continually. The laird gave ready permission, only offering a caution against the perils of the tide, rising and falling as it did perpetually in the very path. Of this, Ella had no fear; for not the most skilful seamen could be more cautious, or appear more knowing than Archie, when he had to do with the tide. His sister observed that he had never put life or limb in the way of peril; and this caution so peculiar to children in Archie's state, went far to confirm the island superstition that the poor boy was under special invisible protection, and therefore screened from ill usage at the hand of man, as well as from natural perils.

The Storr being yielded to Archie as freely as the rocks to Ronald and the peat-moss to Fergus, Ella's business was done, and her gratitude secured,—gratitude offered as soon as deserved, and in greater abundance than the laird thought the occasion required, however Mr. Callum might complain of the absence of this prime qualification of a tenant. Ella's gratitude was not eloquent, but the laird saw enough of its effects upon her countenance and manner to wonder at the degree of satisfaction caused by the present arrangement. He kindly bade Ella farewell, and while she rapidly descended the rocks by one path, he sought his party by another.

He found his companions in great consternation, and the boatmen looking about on the beach, as if for something which had been dropped. What were

they looking for,—a bracelet, a brooch, or was it a watch? Ornaments and valuables should not be trusted abroad on such expeditions.—O it was nothing of that kind; it was the boat they were looking for! The boat! and did they expect to find it among the shingles, or hidden under the sea-weeds? Who had drawn it up on the beach or moored it in the cove? Nobody could lay claim to the praise of such a service; the boat had been left to itself, and had, of course, drifted down the Sound with the tide, and was probably dashed to pieces. While the responsible persons were bandying reproaches, the English gentleman began to anticipate the fate he had been warned of,—a pig for his pillow, and eggs in his shoes, if indeed he could hope for the luxury of a bed, or of liberty to put off his clothes. The laird ordered the only measure now in their power,—to borrow the boat in which Ella and her brothers were about to return home. The farmer promised to house his relations for the night, and to send them back when his boat should return the next morning.

After waiting more than an hour, the people appeared at a great distance on the beach bearing the boat, instead of on the sea, being borne by the boat. The farmer explained that this was, perhaps, the shorter way, as the jutting rocks must have compelled them to make a wide circuit.

“Where are the oars?” said the laird, as they approached; whereupon they once more looked around them, saying, they thought the oars had

been safe enough though the boat was gone. It was not the case, however, and more messengers were dispatched for Ella's oars. The ladies began to shiver and look at each other, when one of their companions observed it would be terribly late and very dark before they could get home.

"Late, but not dark," said the laird; "you forget how long our twilight lasts. We shall be able to see our way till midnight.—Come, make haste with your stowage, my good man. But look here! how are you to row? The pins are out that should fix your oars."

They had disappeared since morning, Fergus said, and he could not imagine how; he and his brother never pretended to row without, and it was not they who had loosened the pins. It was of more importance to supply the pins than to find who had taken them. Farmer Murdoch sent his boys to pull some teeth out of his wooden harrow, and, after another hour, they were fitted in, the boat launched with the ladies in it, and all apparently ready at last. No sooner, however, had the little vessel left the cove, than it was found to be a pity that there was no sail, as the wind seemed likely to be favourable, and might make up for lost time. In the midst of doubt and debate, the rowers put back, waving their bonnets to Murdoch and his party, who were ascending the rock.

"What's your will?" cried all on shore.

"A sail! a mast!" answered all in the boat. One went one way and another another, to find a pole for the mast, and a broomstick for the yard;

and blankets to make a sail. There was no step for a mast, nor provision for a rudder; but no matter! The pole was tied with twine to one of the benches, and an oar was held at the helm, while the blankets were pinned together with wooden skewers, and managed by means of a scarlet garter tied to the corner, and thus transferred from the knee of one of the boatmen to his hand. The preparations being completed, the progress of the party was again watched by Ella, who anxiously observed the length of the shadows from the rocks upon the bay. When the boat emerged from the shadow and was caught by the wind, it appeared likely to be blown due north, and the party might have been landed very wide of their destination, if a little puff of wind had not carried the sail overboard, and obliged the men to take to their oars after all. It was evident, from there being no delay, that nobody was lost or injured, and Farmer Murdoch was, therefore, at liberty to laugh when he saw his blankets, with their scarlet ornaments, gently floated down the Sound, and seeming to excite the curiosity of the sea birds, which made a dip, in their evening flight homewards, to look at this new marine production.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST EXCURSION.

THE laird's orders being too positive to be disobeyed, Ella and her brothers were permitted to enter their new dwelling by the time the herrings began to appear from the deep seas to the north. As Ella was anxious to be preparing her resources against the rent day, she watched the first signs of the approach of the fish, determining to try the experiment of selling them fresh to the people at the other end of her island, who, having no boats, could not fish for themselves. Ronald was going out to his usual labour in the field one July morning; when he observed Ella looking first up to the sky and then abroad over the glittering Sound in which the islands lay, like vessels becalmed, and beyond which arose the blue peaks of Argyleshire.

"The sun is bright over Lorn, Ella; were ye thinking of a trip to-day?"

"Indeed I was,—not with the nets,—time enough for that; but we might try with the hook and see if the shoals are near; but if the sun will not keep out, we shall only lose our day."

"What is Archie going to do?"

"Archie, my man," said his sister, "will ye bring me some eggs this day? See, the fowl are waiting for ye."

"We'll wait a bit," said Ella to her brother;

"if he does not come back in half an hour, we may trust to the sun not to cheat us." So Ronald looked out the rods and hooks, while his sister bustled about the cottage before she girded herself for the oar. While thus employed, she sang in the raised voice with which maidens sing in these islands. Ere long, she turned round and saw Archie sitting at the door-sill fastening a piece of string to a switch, in imitation of the rods Ronald was preparing.

"Well, Archie; have you quarrelled with the birds to-day, that ye are home so soon? And where are my eggs?"

"The fowl must wait," muttered Archie. "I can't play to-day."

"Are ye ill, my lad?" enquired his sister, tenderly passing her hand over his forehead: but Archie withdrew himself and began switching himself with his new rod.

"Ye may go to the field, Ronald; I'm not for the sea to-day," said Ella. And in less than an hour the sky was overcast, and summer storms swept over the Sound at intervals till night.

"We may always trust Archie," observed Ronald. "He has a keener sight into the place of storms than we."

The next day the birds did not wait in vain for Archie. He was stirring as soon as they, having stolen out from his sister's side at dawn, and crossed the bar of sand while the tide was yet low. When the sun peeped above the mountains of Lorn, as fair as on the preceding day,

the little lad shouted and clapped his hands above his head ; whereupon myriads of sea-birds rose fluttering round him, and wheeled, and dipped, and hovered with cries that would have dismayed a stranger, but which Archie always gloried in provoking. While they drove round his head like autumn leaves in a storm, the terns and gulls screaming, the auks piping, and the cormorants croaking, the boy answered them with shouts and waved his bonnet over his head. Then he clambered to the highest point he could reach that he might watch the long files of solan geese, as they took their morning flight southwards, and be sure that they were out of sight before he filled his bonnet with their eggs.

His sister and Ronald observed him when they had pushed off from the beach, and were winning their way, each with a steady oar, to the deep waters beyond the bay.

“ Fare ye well, Archie,” shouted Ronald in a voice which made the rocks ring again ; but Archie took no notice.

“ He is too busy to mind. See how he peeps over yon ledge that neither you nor I dare climb. I wager he finds a prize there : he’s dancing with pleasure. He has taken them all, and down he creeps,—aye, take care, my lad : that’s it ; now on his knees, and there finding a step with his foot. Ye see he never slips. Now he’s down, I’ll try to win a look.”

Ella sang with all the power of her lungs, and this time Archie turned, clapped his hands and stood still to watch the boat.

‘ He will not be home sooner than we,” said Ronald. “ He is happy to-day, and he will wait for the afternoon ebb.”

“ I have put some more bannocks in his hole,” said Ella, “ and some fresh water, so he will want for nothing till night.”

“ And the storm cast up so much weed yesterday,” said Ronald, “ that he may float all the day, if he likes.”

This floating was Archie’s favourite amusement, in the interval between the departure of the gannets in the morning and their return from the south at eve. There was a strong current round the Storr, from an eddy below the hole he called his cave quite round the point to a ledge of rocks on the other side of the promontory ; which ledge being a favourable spot for embarkation, was called the quay. Archie’s delight was to drop feathers, straws, weed, or eggshells, into the eddy, to watch them come up again after they had disappeared, and float round the point, and to find them again collected at the quay. Nobody could please him so well as by giving him a new substance to float ; and he brought home many a gannet for the sake of the feathers, more than for the kind smile and stroke of the head with which Ella rewarded such enterprises. She was proud of Archie’s feats in bird-catching ; and if ever she spoke to a stranger on her domestic affairs, represented Archie as adding to the resources of the household, in no small degree. He seldom exerted himself to hunt the puffins out of their burrows

in the rock, and had not sense or patience to manage snares; but such birds as were stupid enough to go on laying their eggs where they were taken away as soon as they appeared, and such as were tame enough to sit still and be taken by the hand, were Archie's prey. He twisted their necks as he had seen his brothers do, and pouched them in his plaid, and still conceived himself to be on terms of close friendship with the species, fancying that their morning screams were cries of invitation to him, and returning the compliment at eve, by singing southwards from the highest point he could reach, if he thought them late in coming home.

Ella was not mistaken in thinking the herrings were come. There were so many stragglers ready to be caught with newly-tinned hooks, that it was evident a shoal was at hand, and that her nets might be brought into use within a few days.

"See there!" said Ella, when late in the afternoon she and her brother suspended their labour to eat and rest; "it brightens one's eyes to see such a spoil for one day."

"And such fine fish too," replied Ronald. "My heart misgave me this morning lest we should find them like what they were last year. It would be a good thing for such as we if we could judge of herring like cod, and know when we should find them well-fed and most fit to be eaten. Last year they were as lean as a moor, and now they are as plump as a barley-field."

"Thanks be to Him that guides them in the

deep waters," said Ella; "there will be joy under many a roof this season."

Ronald reverently uncovered his head. "I wonder," said he, "that we see no more boats. Yon sloop is from Greenock, I wager; come to take up herrings and kelp. She may keep her anchor down long; for not a hook has been thrown in the Sound till ours, that I could see, and yonder is the first kelp fire within sight this season."

"Ye'll have one of your own, next season, Ronald, and, I doubt not, it will show light betimes. So willing as ye are to help in the field and on the water, we owe ye our toil when the storms come. The field once laid out, and the profits of the fish safe pouched, and Fergus's peat stored, he and I will be your servants in our turn, Ronald, and cut and cull weed as fast as ye can draw it in. The rope is begun already."

"Is it? How thoughtful ye are, Ella! When could ye find time to think of my rope?"

"O, there's ever time for what ought to be provided. I have thinned the pony's tail now and then for a long time, so that I have near hair enough; and when Archie was heavy one day, I thought I could work for you and sing to him at one time; and in the storm yesterday I twisted more. We shall have a long stout rope before the first large drift of weed, and if ye crop the ledges as plentifully as they promise, we shall have a grand fire, one of the first of the season. How proud it will make me,

Ronald, to help to row over your first venture of kelp!"

"Not so proud as it will make me to put the money into the pouch, Ella. To think that I help to pay the laird!"

"I wish it might be into his own hands," said Ella. "I should like to make you the bearer of it then."

"And if not," said Ronald, "it will be honour enough to discharge ourselves of Mr. Callum. Ye have taught me my lesson there, Ella; and when the time comes, I'll show ye a picture of yourself as like as a lad can be to a tall woman. I'll go out beside the door when I hear the pace of his pony on the shingle, and fold my arms in my plaid, and make a reverence about half as low as to the laird, only stiffer. And I'll show the lap of the pouch and say, 'Here are the laird's dues. Would it please you to count them now or when we have pledged your head and ours?'"

"Ye're a saucy lad," said Ella: "you know he can't bear to hear that any one is head over him."

"That is the very reason everybody puts him in mind of it," replied Ronald. "Well; all this time Fergus is holding his pony, and you are spreading the best cloth, and he is looking doubtful whether he shall come in, not liking the coldness of people so far below him, but smelling the hot goose very savoury.—So he comes in to count the dues at any rate, after which—"

"Now, Ronald, hold your tongue, or we shall

have no dues to count. I've done my meal, and see where we have drifted, and the sun going down too."

Ella plied both oars, while Ronald hastily devoured the rest of his bannock. When they got within easy reach of home, they once more drew in their oars and cast their hooks; but as it was with less success than before, Ronald again gave a loose to his tongue, in a way which his awe of his sister would not have allowed if Fergus had not been absent, and if his being Ella's sole partner in an excursion of business had not established an unusual familiarity between them. After providing that Fergus should have his turn as rent-payer, he went on—

"I should like to make Archie do it for once. Do you think we could teach him his lesson?"

"I will not have him tried," said Ella decidedly. "Archie is not made to hold a money-pouch, nor to have any worldly dealings."

"Yet he brings in what helps to fill it."

"And how innocently! It is his love for the things that God made that makes him follow sport. The birds are his playmates while they wheel round his head, and when he takes them on the nest, he has no thought of gain,—and evil be to him that first puts the thought into him! He strokes their soft feathers against his cheek, and watches the white specks wandering through the water like snow-flakes through the air. He does not look beyond the pleasure to his eyes and to his heart, and he never shall; and gold and silver are not the things to give pleasure to

such an eye and such a heart, and he shall never know them."

"Then he can never know how much he owes you, Ella, for the care you take of him. He little guesses how you have spun half the night to make his plaid, and won money hardly to find him a bonnet, and all the toil of your fishing, and grinding, and baking."

"And why should he? He loves me, and all the better for not knowing why. He wears his plaid as the birds do their feathers; he feels it warm, and never thinks where it came from. He finds his barley-cakes and fresh water in his cave as lambs find clover and springs in their pasture. I see him satisfied, and like that he should love me for what costs me no toil,—for singing when he is heavy, and for wearing what he brings me when he is merry. When he lays his hot head in my lap, or pulls my skirt to make me listen to the wind, I value his love all the more for its not being bought."

"I see you always lure him out when Mr. Callum is coming," observed Ronald.

"Yes; and for the same reason I let him hide himself among the rocks the day the laird was here—I have a constant fear that Mr. Callum would be for sending him away; and so I hinder our having any words about the lad. I am easier about that since the laird himself took notice of him so kindly: but Mr. Callum shall never lay a finger on his head, even to bless him, if I can help it. Better keep him innocent of the man entirely."

“ He is likely to be innocent of all but ourselves, and now and then the Murdochs ; for he sees nobody else.”

“ He has more companions than we have, too. He makes friendship where we only make war among living things. How he would handle these very fish that we stow away so carelessly ! But come ; we have caught the last we shall get to-day : let us make haste home and to rest. I must be stirring early and away to make the first winnings for the pouch, and Fergus shall have his turn with me to-morrow.”

Ella was determined to try for once whether she could not make her way by land to the north of the island. There was no road, and the difficulty of some of the passes was so great as to render the journey as fatiguing as one of twenty miles. In a strait line, it would not have been so much as two miles ; but the many and steep ascents trebled the actual distance, while some were nearly if not quite impassable. If she could once, with her pony, traverse the island, she might be able to judge whether it would afford any market for her fresh fish ; and at the same time learn whether there were fertile spots to which her brothers might drive their cattle, and whether it would answer to load their pony with weed for manure or kelp from different parts of the shore.

It proved a toilsome experiment. She sold some of her fish at her own price ; but there were so few families, and they could so seldom afford to buy food, that it seemed hardly likely

to answer to give up a whole day of her own labour and the pony's for so poor a return, in addition to the previous day's labour in fishing. They found some patches of good grass among the dells, but too difficult of access to be of much use; and their examination of the shore convinced them that Ronald had possession of the best portion within the circuit of the island. —All this settled, the next object was to prepare for a trip to the Greenock sloop.

CHAPTER IV.

WHOM HAVE WE HERE?

RONALD had an opportunity of being dignified towards Mr. Callum long before the rent-day came round. The steward's curiosity led him to visit the tenants and see how they were attempting to improve their croft; and one day in October his boat was seen rounding the Storr, and making for the landing-place. Archie happened to be amusing himself on his island at the time, and Mr. Callum was observed by Ella to turn round as if watching the boy's proceedings up to the moment of landing. He looked by no means in his pleasantest mood.

"Good morning," said he, as Ella awaited him at the door of the cottage. "Where are your brothers? I want your brothers."

"Ronald is in the field. I will call him, if

you will please to sit down. He will not detain you."

"Let him alone, pray. The other lads will do as well."

"Fergus is gone a trip to-day to sell his peat; we do not expect him till night."

"To sell his peat! He had better take care of his own supply first, I think. You will want to use all you can get before the winter is over."

Ella replied by opening a boarded window on one side of the cottage, through which was seen, at a little distance, a large well-built stack of peat. She next added some to her fire, that Mr. Callum might not have to complain that she grudged fuel in her hospitality.

"And pray how does Fergus manage to get peat enough for everybody? He keeps within his boundary, I hope."

Ella was too much offended to answer otherwise than by pointing the way to the peat-land, where, however, the steward showed no inclination to go.

"I would have him take care what he is about," continued Callum. "I have the laird's strict orders that the live turf is to be replaced over every inch from which peat is dug."

Ella observed that it was for Fergus's interest to observe this rule on a land which he hoped to hold for a long time, since the peat could not otherwise be renewed.

"No need to tell me that, Ella; but these youngsters are in such a hurry to cut, especially

when they can sell, that they forget the law. Remember, if I find a foot bare, the peat-land is forfeited."

"Your threat is harsh, sir, and if you should act upon it, I should be obliged to appeal to the laird; but let us see whether Fergus has put himself in your power." And she moved on.

"What is all this?" cried the irritable steward, as they walked up the little sloping beach towards the back of the tenement. "Your brothers get the fairies to help them, I think. Who ever saw barley growing out of a round shingle,—clean shingle without any soil?"

"My father saw it, as he used to tell us, in rocky places where soil was scarce; and when we found we could do little with our field this season, Ronald bethought himself of this plan; and it answers very well, you see. We laid down seaweed pretty thick, and dropped our seed into it, and now the manure is changed into food for us."

"Poor grain enough," said Calum.

"Not so good as we hope to raise in our field, but good enough to be acceptable to those who would otherwise have none."

"And pray how long do you mean to let it stand? The wind will soon make it shed its grain, and then much good may the straw do you!"

Ella observed that it had been late sown, so that they were glad to let it stand to the last moment. The autumn was particularly serene and warm, so that the grain was still uninjured;

but it was to be cut the next day but one, when she should have sold her fish and made room for her humble harvest.—What fish? and where was she going to sell it?—She had salted a cask of herrings, and was about to make a trip to the sloop from Glasgow now in the Sound to dispose of the produce of her fishing.

Callum muttered something about their taking good care of themselves; and the too great kindness of the laird not to ask rent for all they held. It should be done soon, he could promise them.—Whenever they had a neighbour who should follow the same occupations, Ella quietly observed, they should be willing to pay rent for the field, and the waters, and the peat-ground, and the kelping-shore.

“And why not sooner, if I chose to ask it?”

“Because it would answer better to us to move to some place in equal condition, where no rent would be asked.”

“And where will you find such an one, my lass?”

Ella mounted the rock near, and pointed to one island and another and another where situations as good as this had not yet been taken possession of, and which the laird would be glad to see improved, provided he received the interest of the capital he laid out. Callum observed that she seemed to think herself very knowing, and asked where she got all this wisdom. When he found that the matter had been talked over and settled with the laird himself, he had nothing more to say on that subject.

He was not more fortunate on the next topic. He asked who it was on the Storr that was screaming like a sea-gull, and throwing his arms about as if he was going to fly across the Sound ? Ella paused a moment before she replied that it was her brother Archibald ; and then underwent a cross-questioning about the lad, and the reasons why he had not been introduced with the rest into Mr. Callum's august presence. An obvious mode of venting his spleen now presented itself. He insisted upon what Ella did not attempt to deny, that the Storr did not come within her boundaries, and followed this up by a prohibition to every one of the family to set foot on the rock. Ella was now truly glad that she had obtained the laird's special permission for Archie to haunt the rock as much as he pleased. Mr. Callum's temper was not improved by learning the fact. He did not pretend to doubt it ; for, in the first place, he knew Ella to be remarkable for strict honour ; and, in the next, she seemed so guarded on all points, that he began to think it prudent not to expose his authority to more mortifications.

Ronald now appeared, ready to show Mr. Callum what had been done in his department, as well as in Fergus's. Ella cautioned her brother by a look which he well understood, to keep his temper and restrain his tongue, and then returned to her occupations in the cottage. Callum resumed the subject of Archie, but could make little out of Ronald about him ; for, besides that the tender respect in which they held

the poor lad made them unwilling to speak of his peculiarities to strangers, Ronald knew his sister's desire to keep Archie out of Callum's notice. He was now rather more discreet than was necessary, and left an impression on the steward's mind that there was some mystery about the boy,—a mystery which must be penetrated.

He did not accept Ella's proffered hospitality, having already ordered his dinner at the farm; but he sauntered down again in the evening to see Fergus come home, and hear whether he had made a good bargain of his peat. A fit of superstition about the fairies came upon him again when he heard that not only was the present cargo sold among the inhabitants of a sandy island near, but so much more was wanted, that Ronald must borrow Murdoch's boat, the first convenient day, and accompany Fergus in their own in another trip to the same market. Callum laughed when Fergus said he had taken no money, his customers not being possessed of any coin; but he brought oatmeal, salt, and a light basket, or rather pouch, made of birch twigs and oatstraw, for Archie to carry eggs in. He was offered oil, but thought they had obtained enough from their fish to last the season. Ella approved his bargain, and said that oatmeal and salt, being both wanted, were more to her than money just now, and would save her a voyage. So Fergus was happy, and nothing remained to be wished but that Mr. Callum would go away. He paced the little beach as if

he was waiting for something, and at last asked impatiently when the younger lad would come home.

“When the tide is low enough for him to cross; maybe in two hours.”

This was too long for a cross person's patience; so the steward departed without seeing Archie this time.

The morrow was to be a busy day,—the day of the first sale of salted herrings. As the cask was to be carried on board the sloop, Ella wished her brothers to go with her. She wanted their help, and also desired that they should gain such experience in that kind of traffic as would fit them for going without her on a future occasion: for she did not much like the idea of boarding the vessel and making her bargain among the sailors.

The lads embarked their cask, fitted, for the first time, the wooden key to the wooden lock of their door, carried Archie high and dry through the surf, and deposited him, laughing, beside his sister, and pulled stoutly round the point in the teeth of a strong and chilling wind. Archie was in one of his merry moods this day, which made his sister the less unwilling to leave him with the Murdochs at the farm till evening, which she was about to do. He laughed when the wind drove the spray in their faces, and mimicked the creaking of the oars in their sockets as they strained against the force of a rough sea. He made some resistance to being landed when they reached the cove below the farm, but took

his sister's hand and ascended the cliff with her while repeating that he wanted to go on the sea again.

The Murdochs were good-natured people, when nothing happened to make them otherwise, and they declared themselves delighted to see Archie, and promised to take all possible care of him. Ella reminded them that the only care necessary was to give him his dinner, and see that he did not stray beyond the farm.

When the rowers got fairly out to sea, they were dismayed to find that the sloop had disappeared during the night. There was every reason to fear that they were a day too late for the market, and that the last vessel to be seen that season was now sailing away from them.

"If it be," said Ronald, "we must take a voyage to the Clyde islands, or perhaps to Greenock; and I should not much mind that: Ella could do without us for a few days."

"We must prevent such a waste of time," said Ella; "so pull away southwards, and let us see if we cannot overtake the sloop. She cannot have gone far with this wind. The first of you that wearies, give me the oar."

The boys continued their rowing in silence till Ella desired Ronald to make for a boat some way off and hail it. He did so.

"Holla! Which way lies the Jean Campbell?"

"Gone northwards before the wind."

Northwards! Then she could not have completed her cargo yet; "but would she return

through the same Sounds?" they asked the people in the other boat.

"Hardly likely," was the answer; "but there is another coming up, the Mary of Port Glasgow. If ye clear the point, ye'll see her with all her sails set, unless she has stopped to take in kelp or herrings."

Away went the boat again, and eager were the rowers to learn whether the market was yet open to them. In half an hour they came in sight of the Mary, not sailing before the wind as they expected; but rolling idly on the rough sea, while boats were making towards her from various points of the shores within sight.

When they came alongside, Ella spoke her errand; and on receiving an encouraging answer, would willingly have sent her brothers on board to manage their bargain, while she remained in the boat. But it was too important an affair for them to conduct, inexperienced as they were in traffic; and it was necessary for her to go on deck of the Mary. While talking with the master, and observing no one else, she did not perceive, as Ronald did, that a man on deck who looked like a passenger, was watching her closely, and drawing nearer to listen to what she said. Ronald placed himself beside his sister, and then the stranger looked down into the boat where Fergus remained.

"Will you make room for me, Fergus?" he asked. "Will you take me home with you to see your father and Archie?"

Fergus reddened all over; and when he made his reply, the stranger was moved also.

"Your father dead!" he exclaimed. "I never heard it. Let me come to you that you may tell me all."

"You must ask Ella if there's room for you," said Fergus; "besides, I don't know who you are."

"Do you ever think of one Angus that you once knew?"

"Aye, often enough, and wonder if he be dead. Why, I do believe you are Angus, sir! Ronald, Ronald! See if this be not Angus back again."

It was Angus; but so changed, that it was no wonder his younger friends did not know him after five years of absence. Ella knew him at a glance, when the sound of his name made her turn her head. She looked steadily in his face, and asked, with a calm voice, what brought him among the islands again?—but her cheek was pale as ashes, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly hold the money which the impatient master was in a hurry to pay her. Angus, as agitated as herself, made no reply to her question, but leapt into her boat in order to assist her down. She drew back immediately.

"Ella! you will let me go home with you. We must not part almost before we have met. I am bound for Garveloch, and you must let me row you home."

"You do not know our present home, Angus. If you choose to seek us there, you will find a welcome; but I cannot take you."

Angus now grew pale. He turned quickly round upon Fergus,—

“ Is Ella married ? ”

“ No.

With a light step he sprang back into the Mary, whispering to Ella as he handed her down,

“ I have much to say, and am eager to say it. For whatever reasons you refuse to let me go with you, you cannot prevent my following. Farewell now. You will soon see me.”

Ella turned back as she was departing to tell him that she had removed, and to describe where she might be found. Encouraged by this circumstance, Angus smiled, and Ella's stern countenance relaxed.— Never had she frowned as Angus did when he heard the seamen jesting on the fishwoman who carried herself as high as a princess to the master. “ It is not the way of fishwomen,” quoth they, “ even when they bring half a cargo, instead of one poor cask like that.”

Angus thought to himself that she was a princess,—the princess of fishwomen. He knew her well,—all her thoughts and all her feelings, in former days, and he saw already that she had lost none of her dignity under the pressure of her cares. He presently arranged with the master to meet the Mary at a certain point among the islands, within a few days, for the purpose of removing his luggage ; and obtained a seat in a boat whose crew engaged to set him on shore in Garveloch.

CHAPTER V.

A HIGHLAND NIGHT.

SCARCELY a word was spoken in Ella's boat during the return. Her brothers began to revive their recollections of Angus, of what he had taught them, and how he played with them, and of whatever he said and did ; but observing that Ella, instead of joining in their conversation, drew her plaid over her head and fixed her eyes on the waters, they kept a respectful silence, and even refrained from asking a single question on the important subject of her traffic with the master of the Mary. The wind still rose and increased the difficulty of rowing so much, that the lads would soon have been disposed to leave off talking, if no restraint had been upon them. At last, Ella observed poor Fergus wiping his brows, though the gale was chill.

"Fergus, give me the oar. I have been very thoughtless,—or, rather, over full of thought,—or you should not have toiled for me all this time. Take my plaid, for this breeze is wintry."

She threw her plaid round him and gave him a slight caress as she passed to take his place.

"Sing, Fergus," said his brother, "it lightens the way."

As soon as he had recovered his breath, Fergus sang an air which Angus used to love to time for them with his oar when he took them out to sea for pleasure, before their days of toil

began. Ella joined her voice, perhaps for the purpose of checking the tears which began to flow faster than at any time since the night of her parent's death. Apparently unconscious of them, she plied her toil and her song more vigorously when the boat neared the cove where they were to take in Archie. They looked out for him, hoping that the song might bring him down to the boat and prevent any loss of time in getting home. Nobody appeared, however, but one of Murdoch's girls, standing stock still on the ridge of the rock. Ella signed and beckoned, and her brothers shouted for Archie ; to all which the lass made no other answer than shaking her head like a weathercock.

"Give me my plaid," said Ella, who instantly stepped on shore and mounted to the farm. She could see nobody for some time, and when she did, it was only the girl who had watched her landing.

"Where are all the family, Meg?"

"All gone, except Archie; he's back again. Father and others are gone to the moor for peat, and mother is milking the cows a great way off."

"And Archie? Call him, for we must be going."

"He can't get out," said Meg, grinning, and pointing to Mr. Callum's apartment, the shutters of which were closed. "He's all in the dark, and he has been flogged for stealing the laird's birds, and I don't know how many eggs and feathers."

Ella had scarcely patience to stand and hear the story. Archie, being left to himself, had wandered home and gained his rock. Callum had watched and followed him, and caught the poor boy with a solan goose in his bosom, eggs in his new basket, and a bunch of feathers in his cap. The steward had flogged Archie unmercifully with his cane, partly unaware, it must be hoped, of the true state of the case, since he had told the sufferer that his discipline was meant to teach him not to take what did not belong to him. He brought him back, closed the shutters of his apartment, pushed the boy in, and double-locked the door, telling the children who looked on in terror that they should be served in like manner if they attempted to speak to Archie till he should be released. He had now been shut up three hours, and Mr. Callum was not to be back till night. Ella shuddered when she heard that the boy had looked much flushed when he went in, and had screamed violently till, nobody taking notice, his cry had gradually sunk to a low moaning. She rushed to the door and called him in her gentlest voice. No answer. She sang as she was wont to do when he was ill; and then the moan was heard again.

“He will die unless I can get to him. I know that sound well. Run, Meg, and tell your father Archie will die, if we do not break the door that I may nurse him. Run for your life! —Hush! Archie, hush! I am coming, lad, and we will let in the light again, and you shall see

how the sea is tossing. I am coming, Archie; be patient, lad."

She flew to the cliff to beckon her brothers. In a few minutes, almost everybody came but the one most wanted, Mr. Callum. Everybody was very sorry of course: none more so than those who ought to have prevented this mischief. They were willing to do anything,—to break door or window as soon as desired. But no proper tools were at hand, and the noise terrified Archie so extremely, that it was thought best to let things remain as they were till Callum's return, which could not be much longer delayed. Ella sent her brothers home directly, afraid that she should not be able to keep their tempers within bounds when the enemy should present himself. She waited, pacing up and down the steep rocky path which overlooked her own dwelling, as well as the way by which the steward was expected to approach.

After a while, she distinctly saw her brothers standing in conversation with a third person, beside the gate of the field. Supposing the stranger to be Callum, she watched with the utmost anxiety, expecting each moment to see the lads show some sign of wrath; but their gestures were not those of anger, nor did their companion, on a closer examination, look like the steward. At this instant a voice close behind her made her start.

"So you are come at last, Mr. Callum," said she. "I hope it may be in time to prevent your

committing murder. How do you propose to comfort us if you find Archibald dead?"

"Dead! Pooh, nonsense! let me tell you, madam, I came down just in time to prevent theft this morning. If the laird is pleased to let idle boys play on his estate, he gives no leave for them to steal the produce. I have not done with master Archibald yet; I mean to make a further example of him."

"Ye'll be too late," replied Ella, with a convulsed countenance. "One on whom God himself has put the mark of innocence, one that has been ever under the guidance of good powers,—one that has only been kept here so long by being cherished, and no ill being suffered to come nigh him—is not one to live under your hands, Mr. Callum; and knowing this, I kept him out of your sight, till an evil day has laid him open to blame and punishment. Come, sir, and see if your work is not done; and if not, beware how you finish it!"

So saying, she strode onwards and beckoned him after her; but he stood still. Callum shared largely in the superstitions which abound in the islands, where the strongest and proudest minds are subdued by fears too absurd to affect children in more enlightened places. Connecting in a moment Archie's peculiarities, which he had been unable to understand, Ella's hints of his being the favourite of unseen powers, and all that was extraordinary in herself as she stood with flashing eyes, and a working countenance, and her tall form trembling with some other passion than fear, Callum resolved to be quit of her and the

boy as soon as might be ; but above all things to prevent their meeting in his presence, lest they should work some harm upon him.

“ Come back, Ella,” said he, in a somewhat softer tone ; “ you will only do harm by going with me. The truth is, I have sent to the laird for his pleasure about the lad, as there happened to be a messenger going. I shall have an answer by the morn, and then I will release your brother,—if you stay out of my sight, not otherwise, I promise you : so go your ways home, and trust the boy with me for the night. You well may, for he never lay in a gentleman’s room or on a gentleman’s bed before, I’ll be bound to say.”

All remonstrance, all entreaty was vain to alter Callum’s pretended purpose : so Ella had recourse to a secret plan in her turn. She resolved to steal up to the farm as soon as it should be dark, and every one gone to rest, and to work on Mr. Callum’s fears by means which she well understood. She now asked impatiently where the laird was. Not where she could reach him to lodge a counter-plea, the steward answered with a grim smile : he held that part of justice in his own hands. Ella could learn nothing more than she already knew,—that he must be near, as his answer would arrive by morning.

As she was going slowly down to the beach, she met Angus. “ If ye have any friendship for us,” cried she, showing her surprise only by her raised colour, “ if ye ever valued my father’s blessing, help us now ;” and she related what had just passed. Angus instantly replied that the

aird was at Oban. If so, Ella said, the messenger's boat ought to be in sight; and she looked intently over the troubled expanse of waters, now heaving and tossing in an autumn gale as if they would swallow up the scattered islands.

"One might easily miss a small bark in such a sea," said she, "and the gloom is settling fast. See how the mists are gathering about the Storr! The osprey will scarce find his nest, or the bark keep clear of shoals."

"There he is!" cried Angus. "Just below, yonder, a boat shot out from behind the rock, and now she is labouring with the swell. She has only two rowers. Your brothers shall go with me, and we will reach the laird first."

"Go, and my blessing on you," said Ella. "Bring back justice and a word of kindness for Archie, and I will thank you for ever."

No time was lost; and in a few minutes the two boats were seen rowing as close a race as ever had honour or profit for its object. Ella could not help wondering whether the steward was watching the struggle with all the anxiety that he deserved to feel, and all the shame of being discovered in a falsehood. It was impossible that an answer should return from Oban before the morning, and Callum's having said so was a new proof that he was frightened at what he had done.—The daylight was now failing fast: the Argyleshire mountains lost the red tinge which had been cast upon them from the western sky. All was gray and misty, and when Ella fancied for a moment that her brothers' boat had given

up the race and changed its course, she supposed that her overstrained sight had deceived her, and retired slowly homewards to await the hour when she might make another attempt upon the farm.

It was a dreary night. The wind swept past in gusts, and hail pattered in hasty showers upon her shingled roof, as she sat beside her peat-fire, striving to compose her busy thoughts. She could settle to no employment, but looked out frequently to see if she could discover the moon's place in the sky, in order to form some idea of the time. At length, believing it was near midnight, she equipped herself for her expedition, strapping her plaid close about her, and carrying warm clothing for the boy. While doing this, she fancied she heard a footstep without. She paused, but supposed it could only be the rattling of the shingle as the waves retreated; but, not being perfectly convinced, she looked about cautiously through the darkness as she went forth, and listened intently. Before she had gone many paces, a sudden gleam of moonlight showed her the shadow of a man, standing up against the side wall of the cottage. She quickly retreated, but not through fear. She lighted a slip of pine-wood and without ceremony held it up in the man's face. It was Callum.

"You are come to tell me that Archie is dead," said Ella, with forced calmness. "No wonder you linger by the way."

"He is not dead nor likely to die if, as you say, the good powers are fond of him. I have

left him with them, for he is past my management."

"You have carried him to the sands to be drowned," cried Ella, snatching hold of his cloak which was dripping wet.

"It was more likely I should be drowned than he," said Callum, sullenly. "He scrambled over to the rock as if he saw the fairies waiting for him, and I found my way back as I could, but the water was up to my knees."

"How long since?"

"Not above five minutes."

"There is time yet," cried Ella, hastening in for food and a bottle of milk. While she was making her rapid preparations, Callum, who had followed her, proceeded with his explanations that, as he could do nothing with the boy, who would neither eat, speak, nor sleep, he thought it best to carry him back to his haunt and let those manage him that could; and he hoped it would be the last he should have to do with people of her sort. A half-smile passed over Ella's countenance; she made no reply, but pushed a seat beside the fire, set some barley-cakes and whisky on the table, pointed to the heap of fuel in the corner, and was gone, drawing the door after her. Callum had feeling enough to be stung with the reproach implied in these observances of hospitality. He pushed the food and drink from him and sat, with his hands upon his knees, muttering beside the fire. A thought struck him, he started up and ran after Ella, shouting,

“ Let me hold-the torch, lass, while you cross, and may be I can get over too and help to bring him home.” But Ella, who had already reached the low sand, waved him back contemptuously, and was half through the water before he arrived on the brink. Dashing, foaming, the tide did not look very tempting; and having seen Ella climb the opposite ledge, wring out her wet plaid and stride on, Callum returned, full of mortification, to the fireside.

The torch blew out before Ella reached Archie's hole. As soon as she came within hearing, she tried to attract his attention by the usual methods, but obtaining no answer, began to fear that he had been placed in some other recess of the Storr. She groped her way in, however, and stumbled over him near the entrance. He shrieked as she had never heard him shriek before, and a fierce pang of indignation shot through her heart at him who had first made this innocent being subject to fear. She succeeded in soothing the boy; she lavished on him all the tender words that came with her tears; she cooled his hot forehead; persuaded him to eat, and hoping to make him forget where he was, and that anything painful had passed, she told him tales till he fell asleep with his arms round her neck. She had soothed herself in soothing him, and was too well inured to cold and wet to be much affected by them; so that she too leaned against the wall of the little cave and slept.

It was some hours after, but while the dawn was yet very faint, that Archie roused her by

starting up and running to the mouth of the cave. A red light flickered upon his face as he stood ; and his sister following, saw a kelp fire flaming high upon the beach. The season for kelp burning was considered over ; but a glance at the boat drawn up on the shingle and at the figures about the fire showed her what it meant. Her brothers were already home, and finding the cottage empty, and not knowing in what direction she was gone, had lighted this fire as the best signal which could intimate their return without alarming Mr. Callum, to whom a kelp fire was one of the commonest of all sights.

“ See, Archie, there is Ronald feeding the fire, and Fergus stirring it. They have made the fire to light us home.”

But Archie did not clap his hands as usual at the sight of a kelp fire, and seemed disposed to hide himself in the cave. It was because a third figure stood between them and the light. It was the first time he had feared a stranger ; and again Ella had to battle with her mingled compassion and indignation. She tried the experiment whether Archie had any recollection of Angus, of whom he had been very fond five years before. She tempted him to a baby game which Angus used to play with him, but which had been laid aside as Archie grew taller. “ Ah ! Angus, Angus, I want Angus ! ” cried the boy, just as he used to do, and just as she wished to hear him, for the first time since Angus’s departure.

“ Do you want Angus ? Well, there he is,

standing beside Fergus. Call him and perhaps he will hear you."

Poor Archie tried, but he was too much exhausted to make himself heard to any distance; nor did Ella succeed better, as the wind was against her. For a full hour, she saw the three figures pace the beach, and look intently in all directions before they perceived her; but at last the fluttering of her plaid became visible to them through the grey dawn, and they ran down to the brink of the water, which was still too deep to be crossed on foot, though too shallow for a boat. They waved their caps in token of having succeeded in their errand, and awaited in the utmost impatience the sinking of the water. When the first patch of sand was left dry, Angus plunged through, and, well knowing Ella's heart, gave his first attention to Archie. Ella gave him his cue: he hid his face with his bonnet, let Archie uncover it, as in old days, and was immediately known. Archie's loud laugh was like music to his sister's anxious heart. He put his arm lovingly round the neck of his old play-fellow, in order to his being carried home; and though feverish and evidently in pain, showed no greater signs of dulness and depression than on some former occasions of illness.

Ronald was impatient to tell his sister that they had found the laird by Angus having discerned his boat off one of the islands, half way between Garveloch and the shore. Callum's messenger, proceeding to Oban, had overshot

his mark, and missed giving the first version of the tale which both parties were in haste to tell. The laird had pronounced no judgment, but would probably land on Garveloch, in a day or two, and hear both sides of the question.

“Then,” said Ella, “thanks to your zeal, our point is gained.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCOTCH ABROAD.

ANGUS's zeal had indeed been equal to that of the brothers; in addition to which his patience had been most meritorious. He waited till Archie was safe before he said a word of his errand to Garveloch or made any reference to his former friendship with Ella and her family. His turn to be cared for came at last. Ella recovered her courtesy when the little party was seated at the morning meal.

“Welcome to our board, Angus,” said she. “You will excuse our being so late in saying the words and offering the hand of welcome.”

“Far more easily,” said Angus, grasping her offered hand in great emotion; “far more easily, Ella, than the coldness with which you offer it at last. If I were an utter stranger, you could not look more haughty than you do at this moment.”

“Nay, Angus; you have yourself ordered your reception. If you have made yourself a

stranger for five long years, you cannot wonder that we look upon you as such."

"I have ever explained, Ella, why I could not come; and as it pleased you to take no notice of my reasons, I left off offering them, though not till after a longer perseverance than you would have condescended to use."

Reasons! How offered? By whom brought? When were they sent? These and many more questions were asked in a hurry by the two lads, while their sister waited in evident anxiety for an answer. It appeared that Angus had written two or three letters before he entered into the service of the nobleman in whose suite he had gone to America. Being there employed in the interior, he had no longer any means of sending to Scotland, but hoped that his former letters had proved him trustworthy; and that when he returned to his native country, he should be able to obtain some intimation that he would be welcome among his old friends. None such having arrived, he now came in person to see whether he was forgotten, or whether the family was dead and dispersed like his own, or what else could have happened. It now appeared for the first time that Ella and her brothers knew neither that his mother had died in Lorn, nor that he had entered into anybody's service, nor that he had gone to America, or returned from abroad.

"Bless me!" cried Angus. "I do believe the fairies are in Garveloch, and Mr. Callum in the right after all! Come, Ronald, can you tell me who is king of England now?"

Ronald looked at Fergus, and Fergus at Ella, and Ella said she heard one of the seamen on board the *Mary* swear by king George.—Aye; but which king George? This was more than our islanders could tell; and they reminded Angus that till they boarded the sloop for the first time, they had not seen a strange face for years. The laird and Mr. Callum were their only visitors, and politics had never been talked in this island since the rebellion under the Pretender.

Angus said he could not be jealous of their ignorance about his proceedings in Canada, if no tidings of King George ever reached Garveloch. He looked grave, however, when he remarked that such complete separation from the world was a serious disadvantage in their traffic. As long as they knew nothing of the prices which their herrings and kelp bore in the market, they were completely at the mercy of those who came to buy of them.

“There!” cried Ronald with great delight, “I always said we should go ourselves to Greenock instead of selling to sloops in the Sound.”

“I do not think so, Ronald. You would pay more in time and trouble than the information would be worth. If there was anybody here who could read a newspaper——”

Nobody within reach, but Mr. Callum, had ever learned the alphabet, and they could not take the liberty of asking him for information, even if he came at the right time to give it.

Angus observed that there would be an end of this difficulty if, as he hoped, he should settle in Garveloch.—In the midst of the shouts of the lads, and the shaking of hands caused by this hint, Angus looked down as bashfully as if he had never crossed the Atlantic and seen the world. He evaded all inquiries as to his plans, and seemed anxious to go back to the past.—He related that after being for some time in the service of the nobleman under whom he went out, he took office, at the particular request of his master, under the surveyor and agents appointed to measure and dispose of lands to new settlers.

“What made your master choose you for that service?”

“Many of the settlers were from our part of the kingdom, and the surveyor and agents were English. Quarrels arose out of their different ways of thinking and managing; and some one was wanted to mediate between them. I am heartily glad I was chosen, for I learned a great deal that I should never have known by other means.—It was not utter banishment either; for I now and then met a face I knew, and could talk with a countryman or friends at home. There was Forbes for one; you remember Forbes, Ella?”

“What! he that was suspected of pitching a man from his boat into the sea after a quarrel?”

“The same. He was innocent, I am convinced; but he was so weary of having it cast up to him, that he went abroad and settled in our district in Canada. He had two neighbours that

I knew something of,—Keith, from Dumbarton, and Canmore the drover. Many a time did we look back together to the bare rocks and bleak moors of Scotland, while we were buried in the thickest of forests.—At those times, we used to wish, for the sake of all parties, that we could send you half our trees, for we were as much troubled with having too many as you with too few.”

“Nay,” said Fergus, “not too few. There are near a dozen birches at the farm above; and one may see a good many alders in the hollows near where we used to live.”

Angus laughed heartily at Fergus’s idea of a sufficiency of wood, and explained to him the proportion of trees to an acre in a Canadian forest.

“What can they do with them?” Ronald asked.

“Get rid of them as fast as they can; but it costs vast labour.—Forbes, who was not driven there by poverty, and carried money, was saved the trouble of clearing. He took a fine fertile piece of ground on the understanding that he would have to pay the highest rent of anybody in the neighbourhood. Canmore was the next to settle; and he liking the axe little better than Forbes, paid a sum for having his land cleared; but as his land was not so good as Forbes’s, he did not pay real rent for some time.”

“Did Forbes begin paying real rent?”

“No; for there was land equally good elsewhere, which he knew he could have for the cost of clearing and enclosing.”

“ Then he paid the interest of capital laid out, as we do for this cottage and fence, and as Canmore did when he took possession of his land ? ”

“ Just so. He first began to pay rent when Canmore raised corn enough to live upon. Forbes raised five quarters over and above what his neighbour could procure from his land ; and then the agent came upon Forbes for rent, and he was willing to pay the surplus for the use of the best land. Then Keith arrived, with his axe in his hand, and two stout sons by his side, and no other wealth whatever ; so they paid nothing. They cleared the land themselves, and built their own log-hut, and just managed to raise food enough to support them in the humblest way ; and thus they were living when I arrived in their neighbourhood.”

“ But why do landowners give away land in this manner ? ”

“ They only lent it to Keith till he should have brought it into a condition to pay rent, till which time nobody would have given anything for it ; and for this loan they paid themselves by taking rent of Canmore. He raised three quarters more than Keith, and was willing to pay them as rent to keep the land he held.”

“ Then Canmore paid more than half as much rent as Forbes ? ”

“ No—that would not have been fair ; for Forbes’s land was as much better than his neighbour’s as it had been before, and the difference of rent ought therefore to be the same. Forbes now paid eight quarters.”

“That is, five for his land being better than Canmore’s, and three for Canmore’s being better than Keith’s. Then if any body had taken worse land than Keith’s, he would have had to pay rent for the first time, and the rents of his neighbours would have been raised.”

“Certainly, and very fairly: for no one would take land that was not worth cultivating, and any land which produces more than would make it worth cultivating can pay rent.”

“Forbes’s time, then, for growing rich,” said Ronald, “was before he paid rent at all,—when he kept all the produce himself?”

“Yes; and a good deal of profit he made. He consulted me how he might best employ his capital, which was now double what he began with. He looked about for more land; but there was none but what was inferior to Keith’s.”

“If he had taken that,” said Ronald, “poor Keith must have paid rent, and so must Forbes himself,—not for his new land, but an increased sum for the old.”

“I advised him to lay it out rather in improving his old land. He could not, by using double capital, make it produce doubly; but he could make it yield more than inferior new land: but this raised his rent as much as if he had taken in inferior land. If the new land would have produced only three quarters, while the improvement of the old yielded five, it was perfectly fair that he should pay the surplus two quarters for rent.”

“Why, then, did you advise him to lay out his capital upon his old land? Either way must

have been just the same to him in point of profit, if whatever was left over was to go to the landlord."

"By no means. Forbes had now a lease of his superior land, so that he could take for his own share all the difference between his present rent and that which he would have to pay when his lease expired. He went on growing rich, since he not only made the fair profits of his capital, but had the benefit of all improvements till the time came for a new lease.—He laid out more and more capital upon his land, and though each time it brought in a smaller return in proportion, and though each would cause his rent to be raised hereafter, he went on improving for a long time."

"What made him stop?"

"Finding that he would not be repaid for a further outlay."

"What did he do with his money then?"

"He came to the surveyor and agent, and told them that the corn raised would sell much higher if there was an easier way of getting it into a good market. There were so few who wanted to buy corn within a convenient distance of this little settlement, that it was sold very cheap indeed, and was often changed away for things not half the value it would have had in a town. Forbes thought it would be worth while to make a good road to join a canal on which there was traffic to many populous places. He offered to advance a part of the capital necessary, if the agent would pay the rest. It

was done, and all parties found the advantage of it. Poor Keith began to prosper now, though he had to pay rent, and to see it raised from time to time."

"What! Rent raised again! Every thing seems to raise rent."

"High prices do, as a matter of course. When the corn sold so well as to afford the settlers a fine profit, other settlers were in a hurry to come and grow corn, and the original cultivators improved their land more and more, and rents rose in proportion. Those who had long leases got up in the world rapidly, and the owners of the land were presently much more than paid for making the road."

"But, Angus, rent seems to rise and rise for ever!"

"It would do so, if all countries were in the state of the one I have been describing. Wherever there is the greatest variety of soil, and the largest demand for food, rent rises fastest. The more equal in productiveness lands are made by improvement, and the more easy it is to obtain supplies from other places, the slower is the rise of rent. Forbes and Canmore were expecting to have their rents lowered when I left them, for it was so easy to get corn in abundance that the price had fallen very much, and would not pay for tilling some stubborn soils, which were therefore let out of cultivation."

"I wish you would tell the Murdochs this," said Ella. "They want me to think it hard of the laird to ask rent for my fishery; and they

say that the price of herrings will rise as fast as the islands pay rent."

"The laird can have no rent unless it answers to you to pay it. You bargain for a mutual advantage. He receives money for the use of the land and sea belonging to him, and you have the benefit of a good station."

"They say that the sea ought to be as free as the air, instead of rent being asked for it."

"The air would be let, if there were degrees of goodness in it, and if it could be marked out by boundaries and made a profit of like the sea and land; and again, if all land were equally good, and all parts of all seas and rivers equally productive, there would be no rent paid for either the one or the other. The laird who owns all the islands within sight, owns the sounds which divide them, as if they were so many fishponds; and if one part yields more herrings than another, or, which is nearly the same thing, if the herrings can be got out at less expense of capital and toil at one point than another, it is very fair that a bargain should be struck for the benefit of both parties, whether the property in question be land or water."

"Or rock either, I suppose," said Fergus. "If we sold the feathers of Archie's birds, might not the laird ask rent for the Storr?"

"He would ask a yearly sum of money, which we might fairly call rent. The birds are not produced by the rock as corn is produced by the power of the soil; but as long as the situation is so favourable to sea fowl as to cause a constant supply on the same spot, it may be said that it

yields rent as justly as when we say the same thing of the sea; and much more justly than of mines."

"I used to hear my father speak," said Ella, "of the lead-mines in Isla, and of the high rent they once paid."

"Yet the mines did not produce more lead in the place of that which was taken away, and therefore the lessees paid the proprietor merely a certain sum for the capital they removed from his property. They bought the lead of him, in fact, to sell again. They bought it buried in the ground, and sold it prepared for the market. Now, Fergus, tell me what rent is, before we begin to guess what I shall have to pay the laird, if I settle near you."

"What farm will you have? Where is it? How large?"

"Answer me first," said Angus, laughing. "What is rent?"

"The money that a man pays——"

"Nay; rent may be paid in corn, or kelp, or fish, or many things besides money. Better say *produce*."

"Rent is the produce that remains to a man——"

"Ella is to pay rent," interrupted Ronald, laughing.

"Well, well. Rent is the part of the produce paid to the landlord when his tenant has made as much as his neighbours on worse land will let him gain."

"True, as far as your account goes; but not

clear or full enough. You do not know yet, boys, how important it is for you to understand all this rightly before you pay rent yourselves, and even if you were never to pay.—Come, Ronald.”

“Rent,” said Ronald, “is that portion of produce which is paid to the landlord for the use of whatever makes corn and fish grow in the land or water which the tenant uses.”

“Or, as we say, ‘the use of the powers of production.’ Very well; this is what we mean by rent. Now, what does rent consist of?”

“Of whatever the richest has left over what the poorest makes of the same quantity of land and of money laid out upon it.”

“Just so; and therefore if your kelp-ledge yields more than mine next season, with equal pains, whatever difference there is will go to the laird as rent. If I get the intelligence I talked of from the market, you may make more while paying a rent, than you would ever have done rent-free, without knowing what your prices ought to be.”

“Had Forbes and his neighbours such intelligence before they sold their corn?”

“O yes; even before the road was made, newspapers found their way across the country; and afterwards we had intercourse with the towns at least once a week.”

“Then I wonder you did not stay where you were. The place seems to have been very prosperous.”

Angus answered, half laughing, that there was another kind of intelligence which he wanted,

and could not obtain there, or any where but in Garveloch. Ella, seeing Angus's eyes fixed upon her, rose and bent over Archie's bed of heather, where the poor lad was still sleeping soundly.

"Your sister's wheel has never stood still all this while," said Angus to the lads. "She shames us for being so idle. What shall we do next?"

All bustled about upon this hint, and Ronald and Fergus made haste to their out-door employments, supposing that Angus would accompany them. After letting them go out, however, he softly closed the door, and returned to Ella's side. He found no great difficulty in removing her feelings of displeasure at his long silence, when it was in his power to prove that he had indeed not been silent while he could persuade himself that he had encouragement to write. When Ella heard that he had been working for her all these five long years; that he had supported his hopes upon their tacit agreement when they parted; that he had returned for her sake alone, having no other tie than the natural love of country; when, moreover, he declared his willingness to settle in this very place, and adopt her sisterly cares as his own; when he kissed Archie's forehead, and promised to cherish him as tenderly as herself, Ella had nothing to say. She shed tears as if she had been broken-hearted, instead of finding healing to a heart sorely wounded; and the only thing Angus had to afflict him was the thought how much each had suffered.

"They that have called me proud and severe,"

said Ella, when she began to return his confidence, "little knew what a humbled spirit I bore within me, and how easily I feared I should forgive at the first word. They little guessed, when they bid me not be so careful and troubled about whatever happened, that all these things were like motes in the sunbeam to me, compared with the hidden thoughts from which my real troubles sprang. When they half laughed at me and half praised me to my father, as being like a mother to these growing lads, they did not know that it was because I spent on them the love I could not spend as a wife, nor how glad I was that my cheek withered, and that years left their marks upon me, that I might fancy myself more and more like their mother indeed. If you see me grow young again, and be made sport of like a girl by these tall youths," she continued, smiling through her tears, "you will have to answer for it, Angus. Will you take the venture? You were ever the merry one, however, and my part was to be grave for us both. Are we to play the same part still, to keep the brothers in order?"

In the midst of Angus's reply, the lads burst in, crying,

"The laird's bark! the laird's bark! and Mr. Callum is standing at the landing place, with his feet almost in the water, he is so eager to have the first word. You should have seen him waive us off with his cane."

"He is welcome to the first word," said Ella: "all that matters to us is, who shall have the last."

CHAPTER VII.

INNOVATIONS.

“STAND back, sir!” cried the laird to Callum, as soon as the boat brought him within speaking distance. “I always doubt the soundness of a plea which is urged in such a hurry.”

Callum, though much dismayed, ventured to reply that his enemies had told their tale first.

“Through no good-will of yours, Callum. I saw the race between your messenger’s bark and theirs. It grieves my heart to find that, even in a remote corner of the world like this, men cannot live in peace. Angus, I am surprised to find you engaged in a contentious appeal.”

Angus replied that he was as unwilling as any one to quarrel; but that he would never submit to see the helpless injured.

“I was thinking,” said the laird looking about him, “that he who has the most cause for complaint is the only absent one.—Ella, where is the lad whom Callum took upon him to chastise?”

“Archie is at home.”

“Not dead or dying, I hope?”

“He is already much recovered, and——”

“What! neither half-killed, nor even shut up in the dark? How little a doleful story may come to when told at noonday instead of midnight!”

“Much remains to be told,” Ella quietly replied.

“ Well, call the boy, and let us hear it at once.”

Ella replied that he was asleep, and that she could not awake him, even at his honour's bidding.

Callum ventured to observe that the old laird would not have suffered himself to be kept from his rest at midnight, and he told the next noon that he must wait the waking of a child. Angus replied that blame should fall where it was due. It was he who had encouraged the lads to seek justice, even at an unseasonable hour; and, though he knew Ella would not wake Archie this day for the king himself, it was he who had told her that the laird would not desire it at the peril of the boy's health.

“ You told her right, Angus; and Callum may leave the care of my own dignity to myself. And now to business; for I see I must be judge this morning.”

So saying, the laird proceeded up the beach. All pressed upon him such hospitality as they had to offer; a resting-place, food, whisky;—and some presented the primitive conveyance of their broad shoulders on which to ascend the steep. He declined accepting any of these favours at present, and pointed to a spot on the skirts of the moor, sheltered from the wind by the remaining wall of a ruined hermitage, and graced and sanctified in the eyes of the people by the stone cross of rude workmanship which retained its place in the building. If the laird had been internally ruffled by the occurrences which had

brought him hither, his unpleasant feelings vanished in the presence of the monumental remains which he loved to contemplate. As soon as he had chosen for his place a slab of grey stone under which some one lay buried, half a dozen plaids were ready to sweep away the sand and rubbish which bestrewed it; and the judge took his seat amidst as much deference as if it had been the woolsack.

"Murdoch!" said the laird, "you seem to be in great trouble, and as you are the oldest tenant, you have a right to speak first. What is the matter?"

"More than your honour can remedy; but if ye'll please to be merciful, Providence may bring me through yet."

"Well; let us hear. You cannot pay your rent, I suppose. Are we to have that old story over again?"

"Even so, your honour. We have had such high winds lately that they have been the ruin of me. My seed, both barley and rye, is clean blown away with the soil; and the wall is down, and I have nobody to help me to build it up, for the boys are both tossing in their cribs at this moment, and the Lord only knows whether they will ever come out again except to be laid underground."

"This is a sad story, Murdoch." And the laird turned to Callum to ask if the fever was in Garveloch. Callum knew of no sickness in any other house.

"As to your wall," continued the laird, begin-

ning with the least painful part of the subject, "I feared this accident would happen one of these days. You had not built it up, I suppose?—No!—It seems strange that, while your fields were encumbered with stones and your wall tottering for want of support, you should not have remedied both evils by the simple act of building up your fence. As to the looseness of the soil,—how did you treat it this season?"

Murdoch twirled his bonnet in his hands and looked foolish. "Did you send in the track of the cattle to collect manure?"

"Yes," replied Callum, "that I can testify; they collected a large heap independent of the weed. It darkened the whole window as it lay piled up beside the house."

"And when was it put into its proper place,—into the ground?"

Murdoch again looked foolish, and Callum again answered for him.

"In very good time, sir. You may be sure I would not let it remain where it might breed a fever."

Murdoch being called on to explain why his land was in bad condition if properly manured, owned that he had moved the dung-heap to please Mr. Callum; but not having time to manure his fields, had stowed away the dung in the shed next the room where the family lived.—

All the farmer's misfortunes were now accounted for. The laird told him that he was unwilling to add to the distress of a man in misfortune, but reminded him how frequently he had been

warned that he must quit his farm if his own bad management prevented his having his rent ready.

"I will give you one more chance," he continued. "I will provide you with seed (it is not yet too late) on condition that you employ at your own cost such labour on your farm as shall bring it into as good condition as when you took it. You shall not be asked for rent till you have reaped your next crop; and then you may pay it in kind or in money as you like best. This is the utmost indulgence I can allow you, and it is enough; for, if you manage well, you may easily pay for the necessary labour and make up your rent too."

Murdoch did not know, he said, how he was to hire labour; it was the dearest thing that could be had in Garveloch.—This would have been true a few days before, but it was not the case now. It occurred to Angus that he might so recommend himself to the laird by the management of Murdoch's farm as to obtain employment for himself on advantageous terms the next year. The laird knew a great deal about Angus, and respected his general character very highly, but was not acquainted with his capabilities as a man of business; and the young man rightly believed that if he could testify his skill and industry, he might secure a comfortable settlement under the laird. He offered his services to Murdoch for more moderate wages than would have been asked by any other man within reach, and they were of course gladly accepted.

When the laird had declared his intention of sending for medicine and advice for the two boys, Murdoch's affairs were settled for the present.

Ella next approached to request permission to pay her half-year's dues into the laird's own hands. He smiled, and said she need pay only once a year, and might keep her money till Midsummer; but he frowned when she answered that she had rather deal directly with himself, if he would allow it, and take the opportunity while he was at hand, as the money was ready. He declared his displeasure at all quarrels between his steward and his tenants, and was not slow in laying blame on both parties. His decision, when he heard the whole story, was far from satisfactory to anybody. He secured good treatment to Archie indeed, and full liberty to do as he liked, but Archie's family thought him much too lenient towards Mr. Callum. Callum was still less pleased to find that he had been in the wrong from first to last.

Angus, to prevent a further outbreak of ill-humour, hastened to bring forward his plea. It was of a nature to please the laird. He complained of the absence of intercourse between the islanders and the people on the mainland, and pointed out the evils arising thence to all parties: the deficiency of some articles of production, and the impossibility of disposing of the surplus of others; the disadvantage caused to the islanders, whether they bought or sold, by their ignorance of market prices, and the diffi-

culties in the way of social improvement occasioned by such seclusion. He had strong in his mind other difficulties and other woes which had arisen out of this absence of communication; but as he kept these to himself, they only served to animate his eloquence when speaking of mere matters of business.

“What you say is very true,” observed the laird. “You have here more peat than you can use, while in some of the neighbouring islands, the people are half frozen in winter for want of fuel: and Callum tells me that Murdoch’s harvest having failed last year, two or three families were obliged to subsist on shell fish for nearly two months, till the men were too weak to work, and several children might have died if Callum had not come his rounds earlier, so as to send for potatoes just in time to save them. He tells me too that the kelp manufacture is mere child’s play compared with what it might be made, if a fair market were opened.”

“I wish your honour would be pleased to step down to the shore yonder and see what might be made of the kelping,” said Ronald.

“I will, presently. But, Angus, why does nobody make the voyage to Oban? Who prevents it?”

Angus supposed that nobody was sufficiently aware of the advantage: the passage, too, was a dangerous one for the island boats, which were, in his humble opinion, quite unfit for such heavy seas, especially if they had cargoes to take.

“Then why not have a proper vessel, Angus? If it went at regular times to and from Oban, and if, moreover, it touched at some of the neighbouring islands so as to discharge their errands likewise, it might surely be made to answer to any one who would undertake the speculation. Why do not you try?”

Angus was strongly disposed to make the attempt, if he could be guaranteed from loss; but it would not do to venture his little capital in the purchase of a boat, unless he were pretty secure that it would not be laid by after a few trips. The laird was willing to enter into the proposed guarantee, so assured was he that the interest of the islanders would induce them to keep up the communication if it was once begun. After some consultation, it was agreed that the new boat should be started the next summer, as soon as Angus should have concluded his engagement with the farmer, and before the fishing and kelping seasons began. It was to make the circuit of the island on a particular day of the week, and to touch wherever custom was likely to be obtained within a reasonable distance. The sale of produce might either be conducted by Angus, or its owners might cross with him and manage their business themselves, as they chose; and the laird engaged that a newspaper should be regularly forwarded to Oban, which should contain the commercial information most useful to its tenants.

“You look very grave, Ella,” said the laird,

when this matter was settled. "You are thinking that this new plan will bring neighbours around you and oblige you to pay rent?"

"No doubt it will, your honour; but I am not afraid. Prices must rise before that comes to pass; and if prices rise, I can afford to pay rent."

It was a very different consideration which made Ella look grave. She was thinking of the summer storms that sweep the sound, and of the perils of the boisterous sea which lay between Garveloch and Oban. She fancied what the anxiety would be of pacing the shore or breasting the wind on the heights as midnight came on, to watch long and in vain for her husband's return; or to see his boat pitching or driving on the waves, or half swallowed up by them. She shook off these selfish fears, however, and listened to what the laird was saying to her brothers. He was warning them to make the most of their tenure while they had the whole produce to themselves, and not to be in too great a hurry to sell. It might be an important advantage to them to store their produce till a favourable time for selling; viz. in the interval between a rise of prices and the establishment of a rent upon their ground. He ended by proposing to view Ronald's line of shore.

Ronald pointed out that, as the sea-weed was to be cut only once in three years, and as it had never yet been made use of in this place, he must profit by this first season at the expense of all the labour that could be spared. He and his

brother and sister now gave their chief attention to it, gathering with great care whatever unbruised sea-weed of the right kind was thrown on shore, and cutting diligently at low-water whenever the sea was sufficiently calm to allow of the weed being properly landed when the tide came in. The hair rope, twisted by Ella, was now brought into use. It was laid at low-water beyond the portion cut, the two ends being brought up and fastened on the shore; and when the whole floated at high-water, the ends were drawn in, and all the weed they enclosed was landed at once. Ronald pointed out several inlets where the weed grew plentifully, sheltered from the surge, and remarked on the advantage of a gradual slope of the shore both for cutting and landing the weed, and for drying it when landed. He showed the situation he had chosen for his fire, and the nook in which he meant to stack the weed as it became dry. The laird, having a mind to discover how much the lad knew about his business beyond the mere preparation of the article, asked him a few questions.

“Would it not answer to you, Ronald, to give up some of this large crop to your sister’s land for manure?”

“If there was no other manure to be had: but there is plenty of weed thrown on shore after a storm, good enough to lay upon land, but too much bruised to serve for kelp. At present, at least, we have enough for both purposes.”

“Whenever your crop becomes scanty, will you give over kelping, or let the land lie fallow?”

“ We must take care of the land in the first place, I suppose, because we are sure of making something by that; but the price of kelp rises and falls so often, that we can never tell what we shall make by it. Angus says, that if more barilla is brought to London from abroad than usual, we may find any day that a cask may sell for next to nothing.”

“ But if very little barilla comes from abroad, it may sell very high.”

“ Yes, sir: but we should not know that till the time came for selling, and it would not do to neglect the land in the meanwhile, so little else as we have to depend on. Ella is welcome to help herself out of my stack, as often as the land wants it; but that is not the case just now.”

“ How many tons of weed must you have to make a ton of kelp?”

Ronald smiled at the idea of his dealing with so large a quantity as a ton. They that made for the laird, he said, reckoned that twenty-four tons, properly dried, made a ton of kelp; and this might sell for any sum between 7*l.* and 20*l.* according to the state of the market. It was not for him to think of ever making a sum like the lowest of these in one season: but he did think it would be possible, whenever he should have the advantage of knowing how to deal direct with Greenock, to make so much as to be able to improve the moorland on which the pony was now grazing. If he could see that ground turned into a barley field, he thought he should have nothing more to wish.

"Surely," said the laird, "there must be much waste in the burning in such a hole as this;—merely a pit, dug in the sand and lined with stones. It would not be difficult to make a kiln, and Fergus could furnish you with peat, if he has enough to spare to sell, as I am told he has; could not you make a saving in this way?"

"We might in one respect, your honour; but we should lose more in another. As it is, the weed is its own fuel entirely; in the other way we should be at the expense of peat, you see."

"It would have been well if some greater kelp-burners had seen this as clearly as you do, Ronald; and then they would have been saved the expense of building kilns which they cannot afford to use. But one great evil is got rid of by the use of kilns."

"Your honour means the smell: but a little care may prevent that being a great evil to any but those who tend the fire, and they get used to it.—When we lived northwards, we always had three places at least where we might burn, according as the wind was; and if it so happened that the smoke would blow towards the cottage, Ella used to take Archie, and sometimes my father, to a place in the rocks where they might sleep in their plaids."

"And no great evil," said Ella, "in summer nights when the red twilight gleamed on the peaks till midnight. I shall do it again when the wind is perverse, and the kelping must go on. The worst of it is that Archie loves sleep no better than I on such nights."

“Is he frightened at being away from home?”

“O, no: but he watches the fires till they smoulder. If it is calm for a few minutes, so that the tall flame can shoot up from among the smoke, you might think you saw that very flame in his eyes.”

“He is ever on the watch for such fires,” said Fergus. “It was but lately that he pointed to the northern lights one clear evening, and told me that kelping time was come again over the sea.”

“Why do you not carry him somewhere out of sight of the fires?” asked the laird. “Does he know the purpose of the removal too well to be satisfied?”

“He does, your honour: and, more than that, he must not be crossed in his love of what is beautiful to the eyes that God gave him. God has given him pleasures of his own, and he shall never be stinted in them by me.”

Ella would not have spoken of Archie if Mr. Callum had been present. Finding himself not wanted on the shore, he had gone up to the farm to inspect the condition of the family; and now returned to say that the boys were so ill of the fever, that he strongly advised the laird not to enter their dwelling. Ella had, therefore, the honour of entertaining her landlord, which she did as courteously as any mistress of castle and park could have done. She formally invited Mr. Callum also, but he abruptly excused himself, and hastened away.

Archie was still asleep when they returned to

the cottage. As the laird stood over him, and observed his flushed face, he offered that the doctor, whom he should immediately send, should examine Archie before he proceeded to the farm ; but this Ella declined.

“ He wants rest and soothing,” said she, “ and that no strange face should cross him till he has forgotten the last night. There is nothing that gives ease so well as sleep like his ; and there are none that can soothe him like myself, if I may say so ; and no man shall so much as stroke his head these many days.”

In her heart she added, “ Unless it be Angus.”

The laird had no opportunity of showing that he took her hint, for the time arrived for his departure before Archie awoke.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECLUSION NOT PEACE.

MURDOCH'S day of adversity—a day long anticipated by his landlord—was come at last. The fever ran through the family ; one of the boys died, and Murdoch himself and his daughter Meg had the greatest difficulty in struggling through. No use had been made of years of tolerable health and prosperity, to store up any resources against a change of times. Murdoch had neither money, food, nor clothes laid by ; the most he ever aimed at was to reproduce his capital ; if he did more, the surplus was imme-

diately spent; if less, no exertion was made to restore the balance, and he therefore grew gradually poorer. He had already let some of his land out of cultivation, and got his rent lowered in consequence, with due warning, however, that, if the estate was let down any further, he must give up his farm to a better tenant. This winter of illness having consumed more of his little capital, he must have given up at once, if it had not been for Angus's care, skill, and industry. The utmost that all those qualities could do, was to keep up the place in its present extent. It was in vain to think of reclaiming what had become wild, of increasing the stock, or of making any new arrangements of land or buildings; and whatever was effected would not have sufficed to pay the rent and recompense Angus, if the establishment of a communication with a market, and a consequent rise of prices, had not been in prospect. Angus built up the fence, manured the ground, and sowed it with the laird's seed, and then spent the months of winter in bringing the place into such repair as might enable him to proceed to further operations upon the soil in spring.

When Murdoch was so far recovered as to go abroad and see what had been done, he quarrelled with everything he beheld. This was partly from the fretfulness of sickness, but much more from jealousy of Angus. He felt, but would not own, a considerable surprise at the extent of the repairs, well knowing that there was no money of his with which to carry them on. He affected to

be angry at the extravagance, saying that he had always wished to see his place in good condition, but had never thought it right to afford such an outlay; and that they who took upon them to make it might pay the rent. Angus good humouredly explained that one part helped another; the stones of the field to build up the wall, the weeds of the shore to manure the soil, the turf of the bog to cover the cow-shed, and so on.

“And pray, how is all to be paid at last,—the laird, and you, and everybody?”

“Out of the crops, if at all.”

“Ye may well say, ‘if at all.’ The crops never did more than just discharge the rent yet; and here’s the funeral, and you, and the doctor, to pay besides.”

“Your barley and oats will sell higher at Ohan, or in yon islands, than the price you have reckoned it at with Mr. Callum. When you go with me to sell your crops, or let me sell them for you——”

“You shall never do that, Mr. Angus.”

“As you please, neighbour. As I was saying, it will come to the same thing, if Mr. Callum, knowing you can get a higher price than formerly, takes less for your rent: I shall, of course, be willing to receive my wages in kind, at the same rate; and I hope you may find yourself clear, neighbour, before the next season begins. One ought not to expect more——”

Murdoch laughed bitterly, choosing to suppose that Angus was mocking him. Angus went on,

“Now that you are out of doors again, and

have a prospect of being able to work before long, our business will go on faster and more cheerily, and——”

“Cease your mocking!” cried Murdoch, angrily. “You talk to me of work, and I have no more strength than Rob there, when he creeps out into the sunshine like a field-mouse in March, and slinks back again, at the first breath of wind, like a scarce-fledged sea-fowl.”

“I see you are tired, even now,” said Angus, offering him his shoulder to lean upon. “You had better sit on the bench, instead of standing to fatigue yourself; but, as I was saying, it is a great thing to have got out at all, and the power to work will come in time, and then all may go as well as ever with your farm.”

Murdoch was in no humour to believe this; he tottered without assistance to a seat, and sat watching with many bitter feelings the exertions of Angus, to whom he owed thanks instead of jealousy for the activity of his labour. An idle and unjust suspicion had entered his mind, and never afterwards quitted it.

“He wants to supplant me,” he said to himself. “He plies his spade with as much pleasure as if he was setting his foot on my neck at every stroke. He wants to have the rent fall short that he may get the farm himself, and that is why he tries to flatter me that there will be enough to pay every body; that is why he talks so humbly and smoothly about his own wages; that is why his goods are all brought here and stored in Ella’s cottage instead of being landed in Lorn,

where all his kin used to live. O aye, he thinks to settle here. But if I cannot keep my farm, that is no reason why he should have it; and Mr. Callum is against him, which is a good thing. I have long meant to give up, and I will do it now, unknown to him, that Callum may let the farm to somebody else over his head. I'll be beforehand with him; and as for what I am to do myself, it will go hard if I cannot get my living by fishing if a woman like Ella can."

This scheme was no whim of the moment. Murdoch had turned it over in his mind as he lay in the fever, irritated by confinement to which he was little accustomed, harassed by grief, and ready to look on the dark side of every thing. While recovering, he had softened towards Angus, and been sorry for the harsh thoughts he had entertained of him; but mortified vanity now recalled his jealousy, and he was ready, for the sake of baffling the suspected designs of a supposed enemy, to take a precipitate step which might ruin his family. He now determined to probe the intentions of Angus, and himself played the traitor in trying to discover treachery which did not exist.

"I wonder how," said he, the next time Angus came within hearing, "I wonder how you would set about the management of this place,—so well as you think of it,—if you were the tenant."

"The first thing I should do," said Angus, looking up into the sky and watching a black speck which was wheeling just beneath the fleecy

clouds, "would be to get at yon eagle that does so much mischief among the fowls. I think the eyrie might be easily found, and should be if you were strong enough to fasten the rope."

Murdoch answered impatiently, supposing that Angus wished to evade his question; "I am not asking you about the fowls, man. I want to know what you would do with the land if you had a long lease of it?"

"I would spend all the capital I have upon it and get more as soon as I could, and improve the powers of the soil to the utmost, for I am sure it would repay me; at least if a market was opened."

"Aye, that would be very well if you had a long lease; but if it was a short one?"

"I should still do the same. I would keep the whole in complete repair, and try to remedy the lightness of the soil; and when I had got one good crop, I would apply the profit to taking in again the land that has been let out of tillage, and——"

"That is, you would do exactly as you are doing now till you could get power to do more."

"Exactly so."

"What a fool he takes me for!" said Murdoch to himself. "He does not trouble himself to use any deceit.—But, Angus, you forget that your rent would be raised presently, and would take away all your profit. You see mine has been lowered since I let yon fields out of tillage."

"And have your profits increased again? Rent follows prices instead of leading them."

Your rent was lowered *in consequence of* your losing, and mine would be raised in consequence of my gaining ; so that I should have clear gain at first as you had clear loss."

" Hold your tongue about my losses !" cried Murdoch, in a greater passion than ever.

" I beg your pardon, neighbour," said Angus, " I forgot for the moment that you were not well yet, and I was led on by what you were saying about rent. To put you in heart again, then—when I was standing looking abroad from yonder crag, I thought what a fine thing might be made of this farm, when once a means of conveyance is set up."

" I dare say ye did," muttered Murdoch.

" I saw far off on the north shore, grown men and women as well as children picking up shell-fish, and I thought how glad they would be to barter for oatmeal or barley if a boat touched regularly with supplies. I looked into all the deep dells, and not a patch of tillage did I see over the whole island but here, and Ella's single field. I saw the few lean cattle on the moorland there, and thought that if the pasture was improved as it might be, what a fine thing it would be for us all to be supplied with meat. Then the sea towards Oban looked quite tempting, for it was as blue as in summer, and the islands as fair as they seemed when I was a boy, and every rock so well known to me, above or below the water."

" Well ; what has all this to do with my farm ?"

" Why, that I longed to be taking my first

trip ; going with my vessel heaving slowly over the swell, heavily laden with all our produce, and then coming back dancing over the billows as if it was no more than a skiff, and with little other weight to carry than myself and the winnings in my pocket."

"And you would wish me joy and long life in my farm when you brought me my money, I suppose?"

"To be sure I should : as I do now, and ever have done. Murdoch !" he continued after a pause, "I cannot let you think me such a fool as not to discern that you have some jealousy against me. I have seen enough of the world to know what is meant by such a smile and speech as yours at this moment. Don't let us have any quarrel, for I know you cannot bear it just now ; but do keep in mind that I like plain speaking, and would rather know at once when I have offended you."

Murdoch waived him away contemptuously with his staff, calling his wife to come and hear the news that Angus loved plain speaking. She joined in the laugh, and the invalid Meg came creeping forth from the corner of the hearth, braving the open air for the sake of witnessing the quarrel,—a frequent amusement of highland women. Angus meanwhile was wondering what all this could mean, but was little more tempted to be angry with Murdoch in his present state than he would have been with a cross child. Presently it occurred to him that they might be offended at his never having alluded to his pro-

spect of marrying Ella, they being relations of her's though very distant ones.

"You mean, neighbours," said he, "that you would have liked me to be more open about my future plans."—Here they exchanged glances.—
"But I left them to be told by the one, from whom you had a better title to hear them."

"So he has spoken to Callum already," thought Murdoch, "and has the art to be beforehand with me after all."

"If you had heard all from that one, or by some accident before you learned it from me, you ought not to blame me, for you could hardly expect me to be the first to mention it."

"It would not have been delicate, I warrant, Mr. Angus."

"I think not, considering how the parties stand to each other: but I am sure if I had thought you would have taken offence, I would have told you long ago."

"And pray how long has it all been settled?"

"Since the autumn."

"From the very time you landed?"

"From the very day after."—Looks more fierce than ever.

"And pray how was your proposal received?"

"Nay," cried Angus, now angry in his turn, "you push me too far. I have been meek enough while your questions and your sneers regarded only myself. I shall not satisfy your curiosity further, and I am sorry I have borne so much. You may well laugh at delicacy, for you do not know what it is."

So saying he took a rope with him and went out to war against the eagle, intending to ask Fergus to accompany him with his gun and to remain out the whole day as the best means of avoiding deadly feuds. He left the Murdochs wondering that, after bearing quietly so much reproach and contempt, he should fly off at last through delicacy to Mr. Callum. Never was misunderstanding more complete.

Ella was in the field when Angus appeared on the height. She saw by his step that something had ruffled him, and she hastened towards him to know what had happened. His first words were,—

“Where is Fergus? can he go with me eagle-nesting?”

“How happens it that you have time for sport?” replied Ella. “I thought the season would be too short for your tasks at the farm.”

“Our poultry suffers,” replied Angus. “We must demolish the eyrie.”

“That is not your only reason, I am sure. Tell me what has happened.—The laird says rightly that neighbours who ought to be the more friendly because they are few, are often the first to quarrel; but you would not quarrel, especially with the Murdochs, and less than ever now?”

“I would not willingly. I tried all I could. But, Ella, when did you tell them of our plans?”

“Never,” said Ella, colouring; “nor did I mean it till summer.”

“Somebody has told, however.”

“Impossible; nobody knows it but the two boys; and they might be trusted as if they were dumb.”

Angus explained, and both conjectured, and the two lads passed their word that they had never told. There was no catching the little bird that had carried the matter; so the two sportsmen set out in chase of the great bird which was their further aim.

“O, Angus,” said Ella; “are ye certain your eye is as steady and your foot as sure as when this was your daily sport?”

“Fear nothing,” said Angus, smiling. “I long to be dangling over the surf again, with the sea fowl flapping and screaming about me, and I feeling myself lord, like a lion in a wood of chattering monkeys. You see we take heed to stake and rope, and that done, all is safe. I will bring you home an egg that shall beat all that Archie ever gave you.”

“I am glad your sport will be out of his sight, or he would be wanting to imitate you. Do you know, we have had to give him a cask to stow his goods in, as we pack our herrings and the kelp. Ronald has carried it over to the Storr and put it under a ledge where it cannot get wet, and Archie is busy filling it to-day.”

“He learns to imitate more and more.”

“He does; and so haste away lest he should come and find out what that rope is for. O, be back before the dusk, lest I should doubt your care for Ronald and me.”

“I will remember Ronald,” said Fergus,

laughing as he shouldered his gun—"I leave the rest to Angus.

Angus found that his favourite sport had lost none of its charms for having been long unpractised. He forgot his wrath when he found himself alone with Fergus in the wild region which the sea-eagles had chosen for their abode. He loved it all the better for having beheld other scenes of sublimity with which he could contrast it. While climbing steep rocky paths, or springing from one point to another where there was no path at all, while looking round in vain for traces of any but marine vegetation, and casting a glance over an expanse which appeared to have no boundary, he related to Fergus what he had seen in the forests of Canada: how the grass and underwood grow tangled and high, so as to make it difficult to proceed a step; how the trees prevent any thing being seen beyond the stems around; and how, by climbing the highest, no other view can be obtained than closewoven tree-tops spreading, apparently so firm that you might walk over them, as far as the horizon.

"Hist!" said Fergus. "There he sits! his mate is just below on the nest, no doubt. Shall I fire, or wait till he soars?"

"Wait!" said Angus; and he paused to watch the majestic bird, perched on the extreme edge of a jutting crag, and apparently looking abroad for prey. He was motionless, his dusky wings being folded, his black shining talons clasping the verge of the rock, and his large brilliant eye seeming fixed on some object too remote to be

distinguishable by human sight. Fergus was going to speak again, but his companion stopped him, only allowing him to intimate by describing a hook, bending his fingers and shuddering, how he pitied the prey that was even now fated to perish under such a beak and talons. Surprised that they were unperceived, and wishing to remain so, Angus pulled his companion back under the brow of the crag to await the departure of the monarch of this solitude. Presently they heard a rushing sound,—whether from a blast among the crags or from the flight of the eagle, they did not for a moment know; but they immediately saw him soaring high and abroad with that peculiar mode of flight which shows that the eagle is not winging his way homewards, but that there is prey beneath. His cry was distinctly heard, even when he was scarcely visible, and it was answered by one so near them that they both started.

“Now, now,” said Angus, “while he is afar, up, Fergus, and fix the stake! Is your gun loaded? You must shoot her as she hovers, while I take the egg.”

“Wait one moment,” cried Fergus. “He will drop this instant. There, there! see him pounce! He drops plump as if he was made of lead. It is but an instant since he was almost too high and the surge too low to be heard, and now he is like a speck among the foam below.”

With all speed, the stake was made fast, the rope secured at one end to this support, and at the other round Angus's waist. When the knots

had been tried and found to be firm, the sportsmen raised a shrill cry to alarm the mate, and the one prepared to take aim and the other to descend as soon as she should rise. In the midst of the din she rushed forth, was immediately struck beneath the wing, and fell fluttering, tumbling, and screaming, from one point to another of the rocks, mingling her dying cry with the distant echoes of the shot. Angus was by this time scrambling to find the nest, sometimes dangling at the end of the rope and buffeted by the sudden gales as they passed, sometimes finding a step for the foot and a hold for the hand, and a resting place where he could pause for an instant. When he discovered the nest, his heart almost smote him for thus taking by storm the palace of the king of the birds; till the sight of scattered feathers and of a few bones reconciled him to the destruction of the formidable enemies of the farm-yard. The large egg was yet warm. Angus put it in his pouch, sent the stray feathers down the wind, cleared out the hole completely, so as to leave no temptation to the enemy to return, and then ascended.

"You have been quick," observed Fergus, "yet there he is, just below yon cloud, and with a prey in his talons."

"One can make more speed with an eagle's nest than with a gannet's," replied Angus. "One is not dizzyed with the flapping of more wings than one can count, or stunned with the din of more cries than one's brain will easily bear. Yonder bird is truly the monarch of the

wild now. I could pity him, but for the thought of our fowls."

"If I were he," said Fergus, "I would finish my lonely meal, and away to find another mate."

"So would not I," said Angus; "as long as my dead mate lay below, I would sit all day and watch; and when the tides sweep her bones away, I would build again in the same nook for her sake."

"But do not you mean to carry her home?" asked Fergus. "She lies within reach from the shore. Let us go back that way."

"With all my heart, and as we have time, we may as well make a circuit by the bog, and send a shot each among the wild fowl. Perhaps Murdoch may thank me for bringing such game when he has forgotten my offences."

"If he does not thank you," said Fergus, "I know somebody else who will."

The bird they had shot was in the agonies of death when they arrived where she lay. Her claws were rigid, a film was over her piercing eye; a faint gasping through the open beak, and a feeble fluttering of the extended wings as she lay on her back, were the only signs of life. Angus put her out of pain, slung her over his shoulder, and proceeded to his sport where sport never fails,—among the pools where wild-fowl collect.

No alarm was excited by their appearance on the margin of the reedy pool where the fowl were diving, splashing, sailing or brooding, as suited their

several inclinations. They seemed as tame as farm-yard ducks and geese, and were, indeed little more accustomed to the report of a gun than they : for Fergus had seldom time for sport, and no one in Garveloch but himself and his brother ever fired a shot. He now offered his gun to Angus.

“ You disdain such game after having brought down an eagle,” said Angus, laughing. “ All in their turns say I ; so now for it.” And another moment made prodigious havoc and bustle among the fowl. As the smoke was wafted from over the pool and slowly dispersed, what a flitting and skimming and huddling together was there on the surface and in the inlets ; what a clattering and cackling of the living, what a feeble cry from the dying, while the dead floated in the eddy made by their terrified companions !

“ Two, four, five at the first shot ! Well done, Angus ! If the bird-king be still watching us, what murderous wretches he will think us ! ”

“ He will revenge his species, perhaps, when the darkness, that is a thick curtain to us, is only a transparent veil to him. He can carry off a kid or a fowl at midnight as well as when he has been staring at the sun. But I hope he will go and seek society, for we have no more prey to spare him. Come, take your aim, and then let us be gone, for the shadows are settling down in the hollows, and we have a difficult way to make homewards.”

Ella was watching for them ; not that they

were late, but she had new perplexities to relate. She had been up to the farm to try to re-establish a good understanding; for which purpose she made a greater effort and was more ready with concessions than she would have been if the family had been well and prosperous. On explaining to them the reasons why she had not communicated her intended connexion with Angus, she was surprised, and scarcely knew whether or not to be vexed, to find that they had no suspicion of the matter. The interview threw no light whatever on the cause of offence; and Ella came away understanding nothing more than that they seemed to think themselves injured, and had refused to let Angus set foot on their premises again till they should have seen Mr. Callum.

The affair was, of course, more mysterious than ever to Angus, who, however, was less troubled at it than his betrothed.

“ I will work for you and Ronald instead, till Mr. Callum comes, or till my boat is ready for her first trip. You will neither of you pay me with abuse, and turn me out as if I had robbed you.”

“ We shall not be made fretful by illness, I trust.”

“ True; thank you, for putting me in mind of that. I will nourish no anger, and will go at once if they send for me. If they do, I hope it will be while my game is good. I shall be all the better received if I carry a handful of wild

ducks, which invalids like better than smoked geese that eat as tough as theirs. I wish they would learn from you, Ella, how to cure their geese,—and many other things.”

CHAPTER IX.

A FOOL'S ERRAND.

THE wild ducks were still fresh when Angus was sent for, as it so happened that Murdoch's wife came within an hour to say that the cattle were in the rye-field, (Murdoch having left the gate open,) and it was beyond the feeble strength of any of the household to drive them out. Angus goodnaturedly refrained from any reference to what had passed, returned, and saw the mischief the farmer's carelessness had done, and made no complaint thereof, but took his seat as usual beside the hearth, and amused the invalids with an account of his day's adventures. The farmer being, for some time after this, as irritable as ever, Angus avoided all mention of their quarrel, the cause of which, therefore, remained as great a mystery as ever. Murdoch saw no mystery in it, so prepossessed was he with the idea that his assistant meant to turn him out and triumph over him; and he founded all his arrangements on this notion. His jealousy was ever on the

watch, and he felt he should have no rest till he could see Mr. Callum, give up his farm on condition that Angus should not have it, and obtain a promise of a cottage where he and his family might live by plying their boat and nets. When Angus returned from the field, one chill, dreary evening, he found Murdoch at the door, looking out for him.

“Where have ye been so late, Angus? It has been nearly dark this hour, and a killing fog.”

“I kept to my work to the last minute, neighbour, that’s all. I had a particular reason for working hard to-day—”

“Aye, and every day, I think,” interrupted Murdoch. “Only remember that this desperate hard work is no desire of mine, and it is not to come into your wages.”

“Well, well, but you will not let one speak,” replied Angus, smiling. “I was going to say that I have been working for to-day and to-morrow, too, as I shall be on the sea the greater part of the day. Mr. Callum is in Scarba, and as I want to see him, I must be off early in the morning; and if I should not find him directly, I may not be back till night.”

“Mr. Callum landed in Scarba! Who told you?”

Angus pointed to the end of his telescope, which peeped out of his bosom. Murdoch peevishly observed, that Angus seemed to see and hear more than anybody in all the range of the islands.

“Very likely, as to the seeing,” replied Angus, “for there is not such another glass as this in all the islands, I fancy. I thank my old friend, the surveyor, for it every time I use it,—that is, every day of my life.”

“What do you want with Mr. Callum?” asked Murdoch, abruptly.

“What matters it to you?” answered Angus, looking steadily at him. “I take your wages for doing your work, but I am not answerable to you for my private affairs.”

“O, certainly; I only asked because I must go with you to-morrow. I want to see Mr. Callum, too.”

“Surely,” said Angus kindly, “you are not strong enough for the sea yet; and besides, Mr. Callum may not be near the shore, and there may be miles to walk to overtake him. Let me do your business when I do my own.”

Murdoch laughed scornfully at this proposal, and yet more, when Angus offered to persuade Mr. Callum to come to Garveloch. The farmer was bent on making the attempt, and was not deterred by the dreary weather of the next morning.

They landed in Scarba before they supposed that Mr. Callum would have left his bed, but found that he intended to embark early from the opposite side of the island, after having slept in the interior, and that if they wished to reach him, they must take horse, and proceed as fast as possible. There was but one horse to be had;

and Murdoch, weary as he already was, would not lose sight of Angus for an instant. He insisted on mounting behind him, and thus they set off. The roughness of the roads, and of the horse's pace, irritated Murdoch, as every untoward circumstance, however trifling, was apt to do at present. From being sullen, he became rude, surly, and passionate, till Angus began to consider what mode of treatment would bring his companion to his senses.

"Take heed how you ride, I say, Angus. If you can bear jogging to pieces, I can't."

"The road is terribly rough indeed, neighbour; but we shall find an even reach when we have turned yon point."

"Even! do you call this even?" cried Murdoch at the end of a quarter of an hour, when they began to descend a steep.

"I did not answer for more than the reach we have passed, neighbour; and, what is more, neither that nor this was of my making."

"But it was of your choosing; and never tell me that there is no better road than this across Scarba. You chose it to revenge yourself on me because you could not make me stay behind."

"You're mistaken, neighbour."

"Mistaken! I mistaken! Stop the horse, Angus; stop him this minute! I won't ride another step with you."

"Do you mean that you wish to be set down?" asked Angus, who thought he now saw a way to tame his companion. "Do you wish to get off here?"

“To be sure—this moment, this very moment. I won’t ride another step with you.”

Angus let him get down, and proceeded leisurely. In two minutes, he heard Murdoch calling him as he had expected.

“Let me get up again,” said he in an altered tone; and he began to mutter something about the way being far for walking, and then held his peace till they overtook Mr. Callum.

This important personage frowned on Angus, and cut short his conference with him as much as he decently could. He smiled on Murdoch when he heard the nature of his business, and favoured him with an audience of unusual length. He could not say, in answer to Murdoch’s suspicions, that Angus had ever asked for the farm; but they agreed that he certainly meant to do it, and that it would be a great triumph to disappoint him. Mr. Callum had a distant cousin who was in want of just such a farm as Murdoch’s, and he had no doubt he could influence the laird to let it be thus disposed of, and to build a dwelling for the Murdochs where they might pursue their fishing. If so the workmen should begin to build without delay, and it should be seen whether Murdoch’s fishing might not begin as soon as Angus’s traffic with his new boat, which was the talk of all Garveloch and the neighbouring isles.—Mr. Callum would not give Angus the pleasure of hearing this, or the progress which was making in the building of the little packet; but he described to Murdoch all its conveniences and beauties, and told him how the

laird himself made frequent inquiries about it, and had been more than once to see it on the stocks.

The two plotters having by mutual sympathy put themselves in mutual good humour, were full of consideration for each other, and pointedly neglectful of everybody else, when they returned from their long conference: Callum ordered refreshment for Murdoch, and recommended rest without consulting the convenience of Angus; and the farmer strove to contrast his own deference to the great man's wishes with Angus's independence of manner and speech. Both moralized on the beauty of sincerity and the foulness of treachery, till the supposed plotter but real plottee yawned without ceremony. They had rather he should have blushed or trembled; but his yawns furnished a new topic to Murdoch on his way home. In every respite from a hard trot on land and rolling on sea, he discoursed on audacity as an aggravation of malice, till, having reached his own door, he underwent a fainting-fit with a heroism worthy of a better cause.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT IS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

No contrast would be more complete or more refreshing to Angus than the state of affairs below to that which he was constantly witnessing

at the farm. With Ella and her brothers everything prospered; and their external prosperity was not alloyed by troubles from within. The boys used in former days to think there was no fault in Ella, and would have been highly offended if any one had spoken of a time when they would love her better, and be happier with her. That time had, however, come. They were grateful to her for the new virtue to which time gave rise,—the virtue of remembering that they were no longer children, and of surrendering her authority accordingly, by natural degrees, and before the change was demanded or even wished for. She waited to be consulted about their little plans, asked their advice about her own, and, still better, not only smiled indulgently upon their mirth as formerly, but took part in it as if years were rolling backward over her head. On her part, she felt that her brothers were her friends because they loved Angus devotedly; and, as for Angus, all was, of course, right in his eyes in a household whose chief bond was attachment to himself and devotion to the interests which were most dear to him. He passed every half hour that he could spare from his duties at the farm among his friends below, now pointing out what ought to be done in the field, now helping Ronald to strew and dry and stack his weed, now cutting peat with Fergus, now singing songs or climbing rocks with Archie, but oftenest talking with Ella in the cottage. He never could carry his point of rowing her out to fish. She always declared that it would keep him absent

from the farm too long, and that she had had experience enough in managing her nets to perform all the labour of that kind that would be necessary till the herrings came again. She could not, however, prevent his following her with his eyes. He now prized his excellent glass more than ever, and twenty times in a morning he would fix it in the direction of her boat, and watch and admire her proceedings. How delicately and securely she kept clear of every sunken rock, how steadily she plied her oars against wind and tide, how courteously she answered a salute from a passing skiff, how firmly she stood on the thwarts to throw her nets, how powerfully she drew them in, how evidently she enjoyed setting her bark with its head to the wind, and making every sudden gust serve her purpose and help to bring her home! All this Angus saw; and seeing it, pronounced that there was no more fitting occupation for such a woman as Ella than fishing; but then, there were few such women—and he smiled at the thought. He had seen young ladies angling in a trout stream; and this was pretty sport enough; but here was an employment requiring strength, presence of mind, dexterity, and patience: it was therefore a fitting employment for such an one as Ella, and none but such as Ella could pursue it with success.

That success was great and well husbanded: Ella remembered that this was, perhaps, the only year that she might appropriate the whole produce, and she therefore stored what she could as

capital to improve the quantity and quality of her produce when she should hold her croft on lease. She hoped to have money to lay out in improving the soil, and not only to keep her nets and casks and boat in repair, but to purchase a better boat and various conveniences for procuring and salting a larger quantity of fish. She wished her brothers to do the same; and, to set them going, made certain purchases of each. She paid Fergus for whatever fuel was wanted for her own purposes, over and above that which was used for the common convenience of the household. She bought weed to manure her field from Ronald, and was pleased to find that he applied his little fund in taking in the lot of moorland which he always looked forward to rendering productive. She went every day to see what was done, and often listened to Angus's prophesy that it might be made a very serviceable field in time, and would probably yield enough the next season to prove that it was worth the tillage.

Thus were affairs proceeding when Angus appeared with a face of surprise, one fine spring evening, and asked who could be coming to settle in the next cove, round the point. As they did not know what he meant, he proceeded to explain that a dwelling was being built just above the beach. Ronald had not been visiting his shore for some days, and knew neither of the arrival of workmen with their rude materials, nor of any business of the kind going forward in the neighbourhood. Nothing could be learned from the workmen, more choice in respect of in-

dolence and awkwardness than even the Highland workmen in general. All they could tell was that they came by Mr. Callum's orders, that they were to build a house with two rooms of certain dimensions, and to get the work finished as fast as possible for the purpose of being entered by the tenant at Midsummer. Murdoch only smiled when Angus told the fact on his return, and said that they must ask Mr. Callum what the new house was for.

"Suppose," he continued, "your packet-boat, that you reckon such an advantage, should have tempted somebody to come and fish in rivalry of Ella! What would you say then?"

"What I have said before,—the more the better, while there is produce and a market. A market once opened, there is room for many; and then there are all the advantages of neighbourhood and traffic, while there are still enough for everybody, and will be for a long time to come. Ella will be very happy to pay rent, if at the same time she can sell her produce to better advantage, and buy what she wants cheaper, and with more ease, and have good neighbours around her."

"We shall see all about it when Mr. Callum comes," was Murdoch's reply.

"Yes, everything is to be done when Mr. Callum comes," said Angus, smiling. "This new house is to be occupied, and Ella and the boys are to have a lease, and——"

"And you, Angus?——"

"And I am to take my first trip in my packet-

boat, and——” Here he smiled again, for he was thinking of another event which was to be connected with this first trip; but Murdoch, as usual, misunderstood him, and took this for a smile of malice. “And I,” continued Angus, “am to be paid my dues, neighbour, I hope.”

“That you shall be, I promise you,” answered Murdoch, to whom the smile of malice properly belonged.

It was observed that the Murdochs took great interest in the progress of this new dwelling. They were now all as able to work as they had ever been, the spring weather having restored their strength; but their invalid habits accorded too well with the taste of the family to be readily given up. The father still muffled himself in his plaid, and sat with folded arms on a large stone on the beach, looking with half-shut eyes at the builders, and leaving Angus to work his own pleasure at the farm. Murdoch’s wife still complained as much of her fatigues and cares as if the cribs were yet occupied by patients in the fever. Rob still kept his fingers in his mouth and lay in the sun, when the sun shone, or before the fire when the day was foggy. Meg and her sister still disregarded their mother’s troubles, and whenever they could make their escape, ran down to play pranks with the workmen, and to do mischief to their work as soon as they turned their backs. All were clamorous alike when anything went wrong,—which happened every day,—and blame was divided between the two who alone kept matters going at all,—the farmer’s

wife and the farmer's man. If the poultry were missing, the cattle trampling the corn, the pig upsetting the milk-pails, the eggs broken among the oatmeal, the farming utensils injured or not to be found, there was a contention who should rail the loudest at mother or Angus; and the only means of restoring quiet was to turn out the young folks into the yard. Their father alone was strong enough both in limb and will to do this—their mother not having bodily strength, nor Angus inclination for a scuffle. Even this extreme measure only removed the evil one degree, for the boy and girls, having pushed in vain at the door, and thrown everything within reach at the window, (which, being unglazed, received little injury,) ran down to plague the builders below, as they had plagued the authorities above. Murdoch often swore that it was time to give up farming, for it was a kind of life to kill a peaceable man like him, and then he appealed to Angus whether he did not say truth; and when Angus could not agree with him, the usual reply of the bitter laugh was sure to come.

At length, just before Midsummer-day, news arrived that Angus's boat was on its way, and that he might go in two days and meet her off the coast below Scarba, and bring her home to her destination himself. Mr. Callum sent word at the same time that he should land in Garveloch the next day from Oban, and expected that every one would be ready to transact business so as to occasion no delay. Nobody wished

for delay. Murdoch fancied that he should find ease and domestic peace in a change of employment; and had already thrown his pride behind him. Angus believed himself within three days of the marriage on which all his hopes had been built for many years. Ella contented herself with saying that her rent was ready; and the lads were eager to be in possession of the lease which should secure to their sister and themselves the fruits of their industry.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDERSTAND BEFORE YOU COMPLAIN.

“ANGUS!” said Murdoch, the next morning, “look through your glass, and tell me if you see Mr. Callum’s boat yet. The day is none of the clearest, but there is a gleam passing over the Sound at this moment.”

The mountains were wholly hidden and a dark grey cloud hung round the horizon; but, after a little patient watching, Angus saw a boat emerging from the mist, and observed that a sail was hoisted and began to swell with the breeze which was chasing the fogs.

“I have not seen such a bark since the laird left us,” observed Angus; “and she is full of people and heavily laden. There is company

coming, unless Mr. Callum is bringing over the tenants of the new house down below."

"That can hardly be, Angus; for the tenant of that house stands at your elbow."

"Well, you can keep a secret, I must own," said Angus, laughing. "However, I am truly glad, neighbour, that you think so much better of your affairs than you did as to venture on following two occupations."

When Murdoch explained that he was going to quit the farm this very day, and should have no further interest in it after receiving an equivalent for his growing crops, he was surprised to see how pleased Angus looked, and asked the reason.

"You know how much I wish for more neighbours," was the reply, "and for improved tillage and increased traffic, and you cannot therefore wonder that I am glad to find that the soil is likely to be taken care of now that I have done my best for it."

"But are you not vexed to give it up, Angus? Would not you like to have kept it yourself?"

"I!" said Angus. "I have something else to do. My packet and Ella's farm will be as much as I can manage."

"Well, I always thought you wished to keep the management of these fields!"

"I wonder at that. Our engagement terminates to-day, you know. Was not that made clear from the beginning, neighbour?"

"O yes." Murdoch had no more to say. So Angus proceeded to Ella's dwelling, where he

had promised to be present when the lease was talked over.

Mr. Callum appeared immediately after landing, leaving the new tenants and the Murdochs to settle themselves each in their dwelling,—a proceeding which took very little time where there was but a small stock of furniture, and where nobody dreamed of cleaning an empty house before it was again occupied.

Mr. Callum explained that blanks were left in the lease, which were to be filled up when the parties should have agreed upon the yearly rent to be paid. It was necessary that he should survey the place afresh, and that they should know that they no longer had the fishery to themselves. Ella was prepared for this; but not so Ronald, for finding that by tilling his piece of moorland he had created a rent on his sister's field. It was in vain that he wished he had let it alone at present, that he remonstrated, that he grew angry: Mr. Callum was right, and kept his temper, and was moreover supported by Angus and Ella against the opposition of the two lads.

"But Ella had nothing to do with it," argued Ronald. "It comes into my share, and it is very hard that she should have to pay for what I have taken it into my head to do."

"This is no concern of the laird's or mine," replied Callum. "We let the whole to your sister, and all we have to do is to ascertain the difference in the productiveness of different parts, and to charge according to the average."

"Besides," observed Angus, "the case would

have stood the same if Murdoch or any body else had tilled the moor. Rent is not an arbitrary demand of the landlord, but a necessary consequence of the varying qualities of the soil."

Callum grew very civil towards Angus at once.

"You have seen much of the world, Mr. Angus; and I dare say you have found discontent wherever you went upon this subject of rent. The farmers will have it that the landlord lowers their profits."

"And the people," observed Angus, "that rent is an arbitrary tax imposed on the consumer: each of which notions is as mistaken as the other."

"I cannot say," observed Ella, "that it is the laird that lessens my profits. He asked for no rent while my field was the lowest soil tilled; and he never would have asked it, if a worse land had not been taken into cultivation. It is therefore the different degree of fertility which causes rent, and not the will of the landlord."

"And when the people complain," said Angus, "that rent is paid by the consumer as an arbitrary tax, they forget or do not know that rent is the consequence and not the cause of high price. Your barley bannocks and Murdoch's look pretty much alike on the table; and would sell for the same price; but yours are produced at near double the cost of his, and therefore Murdoch pays the laird a part of the profits of his."

"And very fair," observed Callum; "and so it will be with your fish in a little while, Mrs. Ella. Murdoch will sell fish which look like yours, and

at the same price: but it will have cost him more time and labour to get them, and therefore the laird calls on you for a part of the profits which you have till now kept to yourself, and would have kept still if the fish had not brought a good enough price to tempt Murdoch to try his luck."

Angus hoped that rent would go on to rise, being, as it is, a symptom of prosperity. Ronald wondered he could say so; for his part, he wished there was no such thing as rent.

Angus explained that as rent rises in consequence of a rise of prices, and a rise of prices shows that the article is in request, and that there are purchasers able to buy it, a rise of rent is a symptom of wealth, though many people err in supposing it a cause.

Mr. Callum observed that many wished for an abolition of rent, because they thought high prices an evil in every case.

"Well," said Fergus, "surely everybody had rather pay little than much for a peck of oatmeal."

"That depends on what causes the prices to be low or high," replied Callum. "If I take upon myself to forbid anybody in these islands to buy oatmeal in Lorn when they have not enough at home, or if a bad season should make a scarcity, and prices should rise in consequence, such a rise of prices would be an evil, because the people would not have any more wealth to give in exchange than if the meal was plentiful. But if (which is a very different case) farmers find that their customers have money enough to buy

more and more oatmeal, and make it worth the farmers' while to take poorer and poorer soils into cultivation, the consequent rise of price is no evil. It not only shows that wealth is increasing, but also helps to increase it;—it causes oats to grow where only heather grew before."

"But after all," said Ronald, "the landlord gets all the benefit of the change. He grows richer and richer, the more prices rise."

"Not so," replied Angus. "Do not you remember my telling you that there is a perpetual tendency to render the productiveness of land more equal by improvements in the art of cultivation? and rent depends not on the quantity produced, but on the inequality in the productiveness of soils. An estate which once yielded one-third of its produce to the landlord may afterwards yield him only one-fourth, and then again one-fifth, though he may receive a larger amount of rent each time."

"This has actually been the case," said Callum; "and therefore it is a mistake to say that the landlord has all the advantage of a rise of prices."

"I should like to know," said Fergus, "what would happen if landlords had no rent, and so bread became cheaper."

"If landowners gave away their land! Very reasonable truly!" exclaimed Callum.

"I rather think," said Angus, "that the first consequence would be that there would soon be no landlords. All land would be in the possession of those who would cultivate it themselves,

and then, in consequence of a fall of prices, inferior lands would be let out of tillage, there would be less food raised, and things would go back to the state they were in centuries ago."

"But if not," persisted Fergus,—“if they did not sell their land, but lent it without receiving any pay, bread would be cheaper surely, and that would be a good thing.”

"Far from it," replied Angus. "The next thing would be that we should have a famine."

"A famine from bread being cheaper!"

"Yes; for you must remember that we could not make the ground yield in a hurry any quantity of grain we might happen to want. We have already seen that land would not produce more for rent being abolished, and we shall soon see that it would produce less; and if less was produced while the price was so lowered as to tempt people to consume more, a famine would soon overtake us."

"If," said Ella, "we have no more oatmeal in the islands than will last till next harvest at the present price, and if people are tempted to use more by the price being lowered, do not you see that the supply will fall short before harvest? And then again, the lowering of the price will have made it no longer worth while to till much that is tilled now, and there will be still less produced next year."

"In order to keep up the same extent of tillage," said Angus, "how high must the price rise again?"

"To what it is now, to be sure," replied

Ronald. "I see what you mean :—that we must come round to rent-price again, even if the landlords did not take rent. So, Mr. Callum, I beg your pardon for being angry about Ella's field ; and I will say no more against rent being paid for it, or for my line of shore, or for whatever will bear proper rent."

"Your sister has made you a sensible lad," was Mr. Callum's reply, "and that is more than I can say for most lads I meet in the islands. They grumble at me, and tell all strangers about the hardship of paying high rents, and the shame that rich men should empty the pockets of the poor."

"And what do strangers say?" inquired Ella.

"They look with contempt upon the tumble-down dirty huts in which the people live, and ask what rent ; and when they hear, they hold up their hands and cry out upon the laird."

"Not distinguishing, I suppose, between the real and nominal rent."

"Just so. They do not inquire how much is for the fishery, and how much for the land, and how much for the kelping-shore, and how very little for the house ; but they run away with the idea that the total rent is for the roof and four walls, and tell their friends at home how hard the Highland proprietors are upon their tenantry."

"But is it not possible to make the people understand the true state of the case?"

Callum said he had never tried, for they were a stupid, unmanageable set that he had under him,

and only fit to do the laird's pleasure whatever it might be. He began, however, to think that it would make matters very easy to have the tenantry enlightened upon the subject of rent: and when an amicable agreement was presently concluded about the lease, and the blanks filled up without dispute, he said to himself that it was pleasant to have to do with reasonable people where business was in question, while their independence on other occasions was not perhaps more troublesome than the ill behaviour of the ignorant.

Ella, being quite of this opinion, was anxious to know something of the character of their new neighbours at the farm. As Mr. Callum said little about them, and she did not choose to inquire, she must leave it to time to satisfy her curiosity; but she augured well from Mr. Callum's expectation that they would find their rent no hardship, though it was considerably higher than Murdoch had lately paid. The furniture, too, of which she obtained a sight as it was being carried up, was of a superior kind to what was often seen in Garveloch, and nearly equal to her own; so that there was hope that the family were sober and industrious at any rate, and that other virtues would show themselves as opportunity offered.

CHAPTER XII.

A WAKING DREAM.

Not a drawback to the happiness of Angus and Ella now remained, and a more cheerful family party was never seen than assembled before the cottage the next morning to arrange the few preparations necessary before the marriage, which was to take place in two days.

Angus had finally given up his charge at the farm, and received security for the payment of what was due to him out of the growing crops which had been sown and tended by him. He was now about to make the circuit of the island, and to touch at some others in the Sound, to make known the time when he should take his first trip, in order that the commissions of his customers might be ready. Ronald was his companion in this excursion, from which they hoped to return by the middle of the next day, before proceeding to meet the new boat. Fergus would accompany them then to share the honour of bringing home the vessel which was to be the first regular medium of the commerce of the island; and the next morning, Ella and Archie were to be received on board and to proceed to Oban, where the marriage was to take place.

Fergus and Ella were to occupy themselves during Angus's present excursion in improving their arrangements within doors. Angus's goods

had been stored in a safe place ; they were now unpacked, and served not a little to ornament the dwelling and add to its conveniences. With what a light heart did Ella pursue her employments this day ! How gentle was now her accustomed song, and how tender the glance she cast upon Archie, from time to time, as he followed her to watch her proceedings and make his strange remarks upon every new object he saw ! Fergus waited upon them both with all the quiet heedfulness of a girl, while his manly spirit was eager to be busy upon the tossing sea.

“ Ella ! What can this be ? ” he cried, as he unpacked a bag of green baize which contained some short tubes which seemed meant to fix into each other.—Archie immediately snatched one and looked through the ends.

“ He takes it for a telescope,” said Ella, smiling. “ It is a flute ; Angus told me he would play to us, some day. It is played by blowing through those holes, I believe, and not at the end, like the mouth-piece of a bag-pipe.”

Fergus tried, and succeeded in producing a tremendous screech. Archie first started, then laughed, and employed himself for the rest of the day in applying a piece of alder wood to his mouth and screeching in like manner.

“ His music is as good as mine,” observed Fergus laughing. “ I cannot think how any body can fetch pleasant music out of those holes. I like a bag-pipe far better.”

“ Wait till you hear Angus play to-morrow,” said his sister. “ He tells me that he has heard

some musicians play airs that would almost win the eagle from her prey."

"I wish he were such a one," replied Fergus. "I would fain have an eagle within reach, and pin her carcase to our wall as Angus has done at the farm."

"You would be a keen sportsman, Fergus, if you lived within reach of better game than wild-fowl that lie still to be shot. But, come, lay aside the flute, and leave off handling your gun, if you wish to be on the steep to hail their return to-morrow. There is much to be done yet, and I have a fancy that they will be home earlier than the hour they bade us look for them."

The boat was in earlier; but Fergus was already watching on the steep, with Ella sitting by his side.

"All well?" cried Angus, as he sprang on shore; "why then, everything is well, for we shall have as much business to manage in this first trip as if our boat was bound for the port of London, instead of such a poor place as Oban."

"A poor place!" exclaimed Ronald. "Well, I suppose travelling abroad makes one saucy. I never saw Oban, to be sure; but I should judge from the number of things you are to be desired to buy, that almost any traffic may be carried on there. Can ye tell Ella some of the articles you will have to bring back?"

"There are more than I can remember now. One neighbour is going to try his fortune with a flock, and I am to bring over some ewes with

their lambs. Then a rare housewife wants needles, and her husband hemp to make nets; and many need barley-meal to make out till harvest. I am glad you are going with me, Ella; for I am to have a commission for some woman's finery that I know less how to bargain for than for sheep and hemp. I shall often have such articles in my freight, for shall women be within reach of caps and ribbons and not buy?"

"You may reckon on beginning with me," said Ella, smiling. "I purpose trafficking for caps."

There was more in this to delight Angus than would have met an English ear. The Highland women wear no caps till they can assume the matronly curch with which it was now Ella's purpose to provide herself. She led the way into the dwelling to show how she and Fergus had been employed.

"You have been as busy as we, Ella; so now let us make holiday for the two hours that we are waiting for the tide. It is full soon to start again: but the better we use the tide, the sooner we shall come back for you and Archie. Where is Archie?"

"On the Storr since day-break. Would ye let him hear the flute?—that is, if ye can make it heard so far, for we shall not win him home while day lasts."

Angus went out upon the beach, and his companions seated themselves round him upon the shingle; and now, how astonished was Fergus to hear what music might be brought out of a

flute! Its clear sweet notes reached Archie on his rock. He came out to the mouth of his hole at the first sound, and stood intently listening while Angus played a slow air, and danced merrily when it was changed to a jig. As often as it ceased, he clapped his hands impatiently for more.

"O Angus," cried Ella, "ye have brought a new pleasure to Archie!" and Angus took this as it was meant,—as a strong expression of gratitude.

"How piercing the note is!" cried Ronald. "If you played among the dells higher up, the rocks would be long in letting the music drop."

"And if this sea were smooth water like an inland lake," said Angus, "I could make the people in Scarba hear me. I have heard it as far over water where there was no ripple and when not a breath was stirring."

The lads had seldom known so serene a state of the air as this, and could not even conceive of waters that had not more or less swell.

On looking round, Ella perceived that the musician had other auditors than Archie and themselves. The tenants of the farm were peeping over the ridge behind, and the Murdochs were stationed at the point of the promontory to the left which separated their cove from Ella's. Though Angus put up his instrument, they still lingered, at first hoping to hear it again, and then being curious to see the preparations for embarking

"Take care of yourself and Archie till the

morn," said Ronald, "and then be up with the sun,—bright may he shine!—and see us cut across the Sound; and be sure ye await us at the quay, for that is where ye must get on board."

"It will save us a circuit if we push off from the quay now," said Fergus, "since we have to bear down due south some way, and we can easily carry the boat over the bar."

Angus thought the same. Just as they were hoisting the bark on their shoulders, the young Murdochs came up; Rob to ask a passage a little way down the Sound, and the girls to keep Ella company for a while.

"Archie is in his merriment to-day," said one; "he has scarce ceased dancing since he heard the music."

"He knows what is doing now," observed the other; "see him climbing to the top to see them push off."

The girls and Ella then walked slowly up the path from the beach to a point whence they might watch the boat set off, and trace it for a considerable way. It was a bright and serene afternoon; there were no rough gales abroad, and the swell of the sea was no greater than in the calmest days of that region. The air was so clear that the mountain lights and shadows were distinctly visible as their peaks rose one behind another on the eastern horizon. Within the shadow of the Storr, the water was of the deepest green, while beyond, long streaks of glittering light extended from island to island, and grew broader as the sun descended.

The little boat pushed off from the quay in good style, with two pair of oars, the three boatmen of Ella's household having waved their bonnets and cheered before they stepped in, in honour of the spectators. It was necessary to pull strongly and evenly till they should have crossed the rapid current which flowed round the Storr: but Rob, heedless of this, and remembering that he had not cheered and waved his bonnet, suddenly started up, threw down his oar, destroyed the balance, and upset the boat.—What shrieks rang from rock to rock, as the bark tumbled in the current, and the rowers were borne, in spite of their struggles, down, down, far and fast by the sweeping waters! Ella clasped her hands above her head, and uttered no sound after the first shriek. Her companions ran hither and thither with loud lamentations. The people at the farm did what these girls should have done; they ran down with all speed to desire Murdoch to get out his boat.

“There's one safe!” cried Meg; “the rock is but just above the water, but he is sitting upon it.”

“O God!” groaned Ella, “save me from praying which it may be!”

Another soon appeared on the same point; but nothing could yet be seen of the other two.

Archie had beheld all this, and more: he could overlook Murdoch's proceedings also from his pinnacle. He was strongly wrought upon; for no one understood better the signs of emotion, whether or not he understood the cause. He

acted with rapidity and strength, as if suddenly inspired by reason; but alas! his energy could only manifest itself in the way of imitation. The moment he saw Murdoch's boat hastily launched, he ran down to his "floating place," as he called it, rolled his cask into the water and got into it. Murdoch alone saw him standing up and waving his bonnet, before he reached the eddy, which could not but be fatal to him.—The cask came up again,—empty—and floated round the point, as Archie had no doubt foreseen it would, and at length arrived within Fergus's reach, and was the means of saving him. He clung to it, not aware of the nature of the friendly support, till taken up by Murdoch's boat. The two who had reached the rock were Angus and Ronald; and Rob had had his wits so sharpened by the plunge, as to perceive that he had better not leave hold of the oar he had clung to at first. He too was taken up; so that Ella believed that all had come safe out of this awful peril,—she alone being ignorant of what had happened at the Storr. When she joined her brothers on the beach, they stood a moment aloof from her embrace, with countenances in which there was as much of solemn compassion as of grief. Angus was down upon his face; Murdoch alone uttered a few broken words. It was some time before she could comprehend or would believe what had happened, and then she was the only one who retained her self-command.

An expression of unspeakable anguish passed

over her countenance as Fergus mourned that he had been saved by Archie's loss.

"Nay, Fergus," said she, "let us leave it to Him who guides us, to show whose life had best be taken and whose left. God knows I strove for this before I knew his pleasure; and now that we do know it, let us question neither the purpose nor the means.—Let us devoutly bless Him that you are here."

While Angus took her home, the neighbours dispersed in search of the body, which could not, however, be found, and was supposed to have been carried by the current far out of reach. When all had gone home for the night, and her companions had for some time retired to hide their grief, or to forget it for a while in sleep, Ella stole out alone, and passed the night among the rocks,—a night, whose natural beauty was worthy to succeed to that of the day that was gone. It was light; and this it was which, giving the faint hope of recovering the body, took Ella abroad. The red lights of the west had not wholly vanished when the grey dawn began to glimmer, while, in mid sky, the stars twinkled as if in rivalry of the sparkles below. The sea was, as it often is in that region, highly luminous; and as Ella sat watching the eddy within which Archie had sunk, her eye marked, and not without pleasure even now, the gleam which broke on the crest of every wave, and was scattered in showers of sparkles as far as the spray could reach.

There she was found by Angus, at day-break.

"You have not been in his cave?" said he.

"No," replied Ella. "I will go there first when you and the lads have left me."

"Left you! and when will that be?"

"In a few hours, I hope," she replied, smiling. "I must see that Archie is still honoured by being kept apart from that in which he had no share. The business of our days went on without him while he lived, and it shall go on now, if it were only to show that he bore no part in it. You must perform your promises to our neighbours, Angus, and discharge their business, and then you can come back to me with an easy mind."

"I will," replied Angus; "and I will not ask you to go with me this time. It is for you to say whether there is cause for your remaining behind."

"There is; this once,—not longer, Angus. I cannot give up the hope of laying Archie beneath the cross beside my father. This will either be done or given up before your next voyage, and then I will go."

For some hours of the morning of their intended marriage-day, Angus and Ella were wandering along the shores engaged in the most melancholy search in which eye and heart can be employed. At length Angus pointed to a sign which could scarcely be misunderstood. He had observed an osprey winging its flight for some distance over the sea, and now perceived that it was joined by another, and that both were hovering as if about to stoop. Endeavouring to scare them with cries, he hastened onwards, followed by Ella, for some distance towards the south-west, and succeeded in finding the object of their

search. Archie lay, as if asleep, on a beach of fine sand, still grasping the bosom of his plaid which contained the gathered treasures of the day.—Long were those weeds and feathers kept as memorials of Archie's pleasures: they were Ella's only hoard.

Angus returned from his first voyage with the lads in safety, and in time to lay Archie's head in the grave. This done, Ella acknowledged that no duty remained to prevent her fulfilling all her promises. She accompanied him, the next week, to Oban, and returned his wife.

Having illustrated the leading principles which regulate the PRODUCTION of Wealth, we proceed to consider the laws of its DISTRIBUTION.

The classes concerned in production are (as we have seen) two, Labourers and Capitalists; but the latter class is usually divided into two, viz.—

Those who hold in possession the natural agents of production, as Land-owners; and

Those who employ these natural agents, as Farmers, or others who apply capital to land or water.

Of these three classes, among whom distribution takes place,

Labourers receive their share as Wages,	
Capitalists	as Profits,
Land-owners,	as Rent,

We proceed first to Rent, for reasons which will appear when we treat of Wages and Profits; and, for the sake of clearness, shall confine our Summary to the explanation of Land-Rent.

*Summary of Principles illustrated in this
Volume.*

The total Rent paid by a farmer includes real Rent, and much besides; viz. the profits of the capital laid out by the land-owner upon the estate.

Real RENT is that which is paid to the land-owner for the use of the original, indestructible powers of the soil.

Land has these powers in different degrees.

The most fertile being all appropriated, and more produce wanted, the next best soil is brought into cultivation; then land of the third degree, and so on, till all is tilled that will repay tillage.

An unequal produce being yielded by these different lands, the surplus return of all above the lowest goes to the land-owner in the form of Rent.

The same thing happens when repeated applications of capital are made to the same land for the sake of increasing its productiveness. The produce which remains over the return to the least productive application of capital, goes to the land-owner in the form of Rent.

RENT, therefore, consists of that part of the return made to the more productive portions of

capital, by which it exceeds the return made to the least productive portion.

New lands are not tilled, and capital is not employed for a less return, unless the produce will pay the cost of production.

A rise of prices, therefore, creates, and is not created by, Rent.

When more capital is employed in agriculture, new land is tilled, a further outlay is made on land already tilled; and thus also Rent arises from increase of capital.

When capital is withdrawn from agriculture, inferior, *i. e.* the most expensive soils, are let out of cultivation; and thus Rent falls.

A rise of Rent is, therefore, a symptom, and not a cause, of wealth.

The tendency of Rent is, therefore, to rise for ever in an improving country.—But there are counteracting causes.

Art increases production beyond the usual returns to capital laid out: prices fall in proportion to the abundance of the supply, and Rent declines.

Improved facilities for bringing produce to market, by increasing the supply, cause prices to fall and Rent to decline.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

No. VI.

WEAL AND WOE

IN

GARVELOCH.

A Tale.

By HARRIET MARTINEAU.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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WEAL AND WOE

IN

GARVELOCH.

CHAPTER I.

TIMES ARE CHANGED.

ABOUT ten years before the period at which our story opens, the laird of Garveloch had transferred his property in that and the neighbouring isles to a large Fishing Company. The terms of the bargain were advantageous to both parties. The laird was to receive, in addition to the annual rent which his island-tenants had been accustomed to pay, and which did not amount to more than sixty guineas a year all together, a sum of several hundred pounds in consideration of the improvements to be effected on the property. As there was little prospect of such improvements being effected, to the extent of some hundreds of pounds, by himself or his poor tenants, the transaction was evidently a profitable one to him; while the Company reasonably expected that the changes they were about to introduce would much more than repay their advance—an expectation which was not disappointed.

Among the numerous fishing stations established by this opulent Company, there was one in Islay. A warehouse was erected, where salt for curing the fish, hemp for making nets, timber for boat-building, staves for cooperage, and all materials necessary for the apparatus of an extensive fishery, were stored. A curing-house, a building-yard, and a cooperage were at hand; a pier, around which there was a perpetual traffic of boats, stretched out into the sea. A little town had risen round these buildings, where but a few years before there had been only a congregation of sea-fowl. Where their discordant cries alone had been heard, there now prevailed a mingling of sounds, not more musical to the ear perhaps, but by far more agreeable to the heart. The calls of the boatmen, the hammer of the cooper, the saw of the boat-builder, the hum from the curing-house, where women and girls were employed in gutting, salting, and packing the herrings, and drying the cod, the shouts and laughter of innumerable children at play among the rocks,—all these together formed such a contrast to the desolation which prevailed ten years before, that the stranger who returned after a long absence scarcely knew the place to be the same.

Nor was the change less remarkable in others of the islands. Rows of dwellings stretched along many a favourable line of beach, and huts peeped out of a cove here and there, where no trace of man had been formerly seen, but an occasional kelping fire. On Garveloch a fishing

village had arisen where the dwelling of Angus and Ella had for some years stood alone. The field which they had cultivated from the year of their marriage till the establishment of the Fishing Company, was now covered with cottages; and a row of huts, most of them with a patch of ground behind, stretched from the bar on the one hand, to the promontory which had been Ronald's on the other. Angus and Ella lived in the old house; but it was so much enlarged and improved as to look like a new one: it was the best in the village; and it was made so for comfort, not for show. There were nine children to be housed; and both their parents knew enough of comfort to see the necessity of providing room and ventilation if they wished to keep their large family in health and good habits. They had worked hard, and on the whole successfully; and though the perpetual calls upon them prevented their laying by much in the form of money, they had been able to provide their dwelling with more convenient furniture, and their children with more decent clothing, than was usually thought necessary in the society of which they formed a part.

Angus's vessel had yielded him all the profit he had expected, and more. Before the Company was established, he had usually had business enough committed to him to make it answer to cross the Sound twice a week; and since the fishing station had been opened in Islay, he had made a double use of the *Flora*, as his boat was now called. The possession of a decked vessel

had enabled him to share the herring bounty ; and he now gave his principal attention to the fishery, only following the coasting trade in spring and autumn,—the intervals of the herring seasons.

As they possessed so great a treasure in this boat, now of the rank of a herring-buss, Angus and Ella thought they could afford to give the old boat to Fergus for a wedding present, and thus enable him to fish for cod on his own account, instead of being a hired fisherman on board one of the Company's vessels. Those who had only open boats were excluded from the herring fishery by the bounty, which was granted to the produce of decked vessels only, and which therefore gave an advantage to such produce in the market which could not be contested ; but there was a fair sale for cod, however caught ; and now that a market was always open at hand, the possession of a boat seemed to Fergus to afford a prospect of a certain and sufficient maintenance. He married at one-and-twenty, a year after the opening of the station in Islay, and in consequence of it ; for he fell in love with a girl who had come with her family to settle at the station as fishers. Janet was young and giddy, and quite willing to leave her father, who was only a hired fisherman, for a husband who had a boat of his own ; and, after a short courtship, the young folks settled down in a cottage within a stone's throw of Angus's house. They had made a shift to get on till now, though their family increased every year ; and as they had never suffered actual want, they began to think

they never should, and to smile at some of Ronald's wise sayings. Fergus declared that, if one or two seasons of extraordinary plenty would come, so as to enable him to get a new boat, he should have no anxiety remaining. He had been anxious when he had only one child to feed; and he was apt to be anxious at times now that he had five: but if he was but sure of being able to continue his fishing, he would trust that Providence would feed them as they had hitherto been fed. But if these rare seasons should not come, Ronald observed, what was to be done? for the boat was wearing out fast. It must be patched and mended to the last, Fergus replied, and he must still hope for extraordinary profits some happy year. He said nothing, though he probably thought much, of the consequences of a season of failure.

Ronald was free from all cares of this kind, though he had had his share of trouble in other ways. He was a single man and engaged in a good business, and therefore well provided for as to external comfort. He was a cooper at the station in Islay, and as casks were wanted as long as fish were caught, he had reason to suppose himself supplied with employment as long as the establishment should be kept up. He was truly happy to be able to afford assistance to her who had carefully tended his youth, and received Ella's eldest boy with the intention of teaching him his trade. The trouble from which we have mentioned that Ronald suffered arose from disappointment in an attachment he had

formed and long cherished. He had loved a maiden who came in the train of the company, but his friend Cuthbert had won her, and after having made her happy for a few short years, had been taken from her by an accident at sea, leaving her with four children, and no possessions but such as his industry had earned. The widow Cuthbert lived in Garveloch, and supported her little family by net-making. She was respected by all her neighbours, and loved as much as ever by Ronald, who, however, conducted himself towards her as the widow of his friend, rather than as the object of his early and long attachment.

The widow Cuthbert was regarded as the lady of the island, though she was no richer, no better dressed, and, for all her neighbours knew, no better born than any around her. She was better educated; and this was her title to distinction. No one else, except Angus, had seen so much of the world; and even he could not make a better use of what he had learned. There was a sober truth in the judgments she formed of people and of circumstances, which was all the more impressive from the modesty with which she held her opinions, and the gentleness with which she declared them. Those opinions were respected by all, from the highest to the lowest, —from Ella down to Meg Murdoch. Her management of her little family was watched by all who cared for the welfare of their children, and her skill and industry in her occupation were marvelled at by those who did not attempt to imitate her.

It would have amused an attentive observer to see how a distinction of ranks was already growing up in the little society of Garveloch, where none had originally brought wealth enough to authorize such distinction. Next to the widow Cuthbert ranked the farmer and his family—the Duffs, who were looked up to from their great importance as corn-growers to the society. The produce of their fields being much in request, they had enlarged their farm, and improved it to a great extent. By means of the more ample supplies of manure afforded by the curing of so much fish, and through the help of the better implements and modes of tillage which their prosperity enabled them to use, their land produced twice as much as when they had entered upon the farm, fifteen years before. They had every inducement to go on increasing its productiveness ; for corn still fell short, and supplies were brought now and then from other islands to make out till harvest. Of late, indeed, the demand had somewhat lessened, as an Irish family had set the example of growing potatoes in their patch of ground, and many of their neighbours had done the same, with the hope of saving the expense of oat and barley meal. Among these were the former tenants of the farm, the Murdochs, who, having failed in all their undertakings, now had recourse to what they supposed an easy and nearly infallible method of getting a living. They had sunk from year to year, and there was little hope of their rising again when they began to place their dependence on potato

tillage. They now filled a station as much below that of Ella and her husband as Ella's had been supposed below theirs on the day of her father's funeral. Murdoch had not parted with any of his pride or jealousy as he parted with his worldly comforts. He still looked with an evil eye on Angus; and, when disposed to vent his complaints or seek counsel, went to new comers in preference to old neighbours. He was particularly intimate with the O'Rorys, who lived in a cottage next to his own, and who were of an age and in circumstances too unlike his own to come into comparison with him in any way.

Dan O'Rory was a lad of twenty, who had brought over his yet younger wife to seek employment in the Garveloch fishery, as there was none to be had at Rathmullin. He had not yet been able to make interest for wages on board one of the busses, and he had no boat of his own; so he dug up and planted his potato-ground, and was content, talking of future doings, but caring little as yet whether they ever came to pass. One evil of their coming to pass, indeed, would be that there would be no longer time for talk, which Dan loved full as well as did Noreen, his wife.

One day, when Noreen was tired of her husband, and had gently turned him out of his cabin, he strolled to Murdoch's door, and lay down to bask in a July sun, his head resting on the wooden step, his fingers stuck into his hair, and his feet reposing among the fishy remains which lay as usual strewed round the door, and saluting

more senses than one of the passers by. Hearing a step on the shingle, Dan half opened his eyes, and saw Murdoch approaching with a leaky barrel on his shoulder, from the seams of which the red pickle was dropping down his clothes and meandering over his face.

"Them are the briny tears for which ye'll be never the worse," cried Dan. "I'd weep such tears every day, if the powers would give me leave."

"Get up, Dan, can't ye, and let me come in at my own door."

"With all the pleasure in life," said Dan, pushing the door open, and withdrawing himself as little as was necessary to let Murdoch pass.

"Eh! it's the herrings back again! O, father, what will ye do for the money? What good does the bounty do to them that can't sell their fish?" resounded from the inside of the cottage in shrill tones of anger.

Murdoch swore at the bounty and the Company, and its officers, and at those who, he said, supplanted him.

"Well, but what did they say this time?" inquired his wife. "I took the largest barrel we had,—if it did not hold thirty-two gallons, there's not one in the island that does."

"They did not dispute that this time; how should they? But they say, not a cask that leaks shall be branded for the bounty."

"Never deny the leaking," said Dan, looking in from the door. "Your own head is pickled as fine as if it stood for the bounty."

Murdoch took no notice of him, but went on impatiently. "And for the rest of the complaint, I may thank you, wife, or Meg, or both of ye. There is not a fish clean gutted in the barrel; there is not one untainted with the sun; and besides, the cask is half full of salt. You women may raise the rent-money as well as you can, for I shall never do it if this is the way you help me."

Meg began to complain that the boat was so foul that the fish were tainted before they came ashore; that her mother had given her something else to do when she should have been curing the fish; that Rob had carried off the knife, so that she was obliged to gut them with her fingers; and that, as her mother would have a large barrel and her father would not catch more fish, what could be done but to fill up the cask with salt? The quarrel was beginning to run high, when Dan interfered to divert the course of the storm.

"I wonder," said he, "ye submit to be troubled with the villains that carry themselves so high. I'd leave them to catch their own fish, and keep cool and comfortable at home."

"We must live, Dan; so you talk only nonsense."

"True, neighbour; all that are not gentlemen must live. But there's nothing in life easier than to live without their help; and I'd be proud to do it, if it were only to see them standing and standing all day, and many days, to see the shoals go by, and never a boat out to catch a

fish for them. I'd go ten miles any day to see them stand idle, with all their sheds and cranes, and the new pier with the boats lying about it as if all the world was asleep. There would be easy work for a summer's day!"

"Easy enough for them, Dan, but hard enough for us that have not our pockets full of money like them."

"Never mind the money; where's the money that will buy such a sunshine as this?"

"If people like the sunshine as well with bare limbs and an empty stomach, Dan, I have nothing to say to them. For my part, I begin to feel the north wind chilling, now I am growing old; and I can't fish till I have had my morning meal."

"O, the morning meal is the pleasantest thing in nature when it gives one no trouble; and if you would do as I do, you would have one every day in the year, without giving a triumph to them villains. Just bestir yourself to plant your potatoes, and then you are provided without more words. O, people should go to old Ireland to learn how to live!"

"I thought Ireland had been a bad place to live in."

"Devil a bit, neighbour. It is the cheerfullest, brightest land the saints reign over,—glory to them for it!"

"Then what brought you here?"

"Just somebody told Noreen's father that one might fish guineas in these seas; so he had us married, and sent us over; but, as I tell Noreen,

there is less gold here than at Rathmullin, seeing that the sun shines one half less. But we make ourselves content, as they do in Ireland; and that a man may do all the world over—let alone a woman that has a gentle cratur like me for a husband.”

“ But how would you have me make myself content, when I can’t sell my fish either fresh or salted? I thought you had had more feeling for your neighbours, Dan.”

“ I! God help me, I’m as tinder-hearted as a lord’s lady. It is because I am so tinder-hearted that I would have nobody bother themselves. Just give a man a cabin, and a bit of ground, and a spade, and a girl for a wife to crown all, and why should he trouble himself till the stars fall out of the sky?”

“ And is that the way you do in Ireland?”

“ Just so; and that is why Ireland is better than any other land.”

“ But I have more to provide for than my wife,” said Murdoch, casting a look towards his little field.

“ Make Rob dig it for you the first year,” said Dan; “ and if there is potatoes enough, well and good; and if not, go fish for what is wanting, or let Rob get a potato-ground for himself.”

“ But we shall want clothes, and money for rent.”

“ Tell the Company you’ll work out the rent, or sell your boat for it, or beseech the saints that love to help. Any way better than bother yourself.”

"Anything rather than bother myself," repeated Murdoch to himself, under the united provocations of heat, fatigue, disappointment, and jealousy. "I'll be free of them all, and never trouble myself to offer another fish to any man breathing. I can get fowl to help out our potatoes, and then we shall do well enough."

At this moment he saw farmer Duff approaching, and gave the hint to Dan, that he should observe how the farmer would behave when it should appear that he was to have no more custom from either family.

Duff declined the seat offered him by Murdoch's wife, as his first desire was to get to windward of that which strewed the ground where Meg had been curing fish. He asked Murdoch to walk a little way with him; but as Murdoch declined, Duff took the liberty of closing the door, and attempting to open the shutter which occupied the unglazed window."

"I live on the height, you know," said he, "and out of the way of your kind of business, so that I may seem to you over nice; but I was going to offer to relieve you of this litter. I have been round the village to engage for all the offal of the season, and I will take up yours at the same price with the rest."

"I can't spare it, farmer."

"Well, just as you please; but I really hope you are going to remove it directly, for your health's sake."

"I trust my health will serve me to sow and gather many a crop that shall cost me less than

your oatmeal, and be more wholesome than the pickles in yonder barrel. I have done with herrings for ever. Do you know any one that wants a boat, farmer?"

"More than you have boats to sell. There's Dan, for one. Dan, you mean to be a fisherman?"

"Perhaps I may, if the station offers me a place in a buss without any trouble; but I could not bother myself with a boat. Murdoch and I are content to be easy with our potatoes, no offence to you, I hope."

"None whatever. The only offence in the case is the offence of a wet season, if such a one should come;—where will the offence be then?"

"After a wet season comes a dry," said Dan; "and the powers will preserve us to witness it."

"Let me see your boat," said Duff. "Your relation Fergus was looking at his this morning as if he thought it would bear little more patching."

"Mine is nearly as old as his, but it will last a few fair seasons yet, I expect. I will make him the offer of it."

Duff was going there now; and having no more time to spare, Murdoch and he set off together, leaving Dan to bask as before, or to vary his amusements by watching the flow of the tide.

As they went, they looked in on Ella, with whom Duff wished to negotiate as with Murdoch. Ella was in the shed built for a curing-

house, surrounded by her children, three or four of whom were assisting her in her employment of salting and packing herrings, and the rest amusing themselves with playing hide and seek among the barrels.

"What a store of new barrels!" exclaimed Murdoch: "You must lose much by the old ones."

"Not at all," replied Ella: "they serve for our coasting trade when they will no longer do for the Company. If we often got such a cask as this," pointing to one beside her, "we should seldom have to buy. Kenneth made that."

"Your boy Kenneth!" exclaimed Murdoch. "Impossible!"

"He has been well taught by his uncle," said Duff, "and has good materials. See, the staves are half an inch thick, and even throughout, and the flages laid between the seams at both ends, and the hoops as regular and well fastened as Ronald himself could have made them."

"You will only waste such a barrel," said Murdoch, "if you let the children touch the fish. My Meg has wasted tons of fish and bushels of salt."

Little Annie, who was sprinkling the salt at this moment, turned very red, and looked at her mother as petitioning for a defence. Ella smiled as she invited Murdoch to look and see how evenly the fish were packed, and told him that there was a trial of skill among the children this day, and that it was to be determined, when

her husband came home, whether Annie's salting was worthy of Kenneth's barrel.

"Kenneth is not to see till all is done," said Annie; "he is helping uncle Fergus to mend his boat, and uncle Fergus says he will make it last much longer than any body else could do but uncle Ronald."

"Ronald sent him this very morning, when he was most wanted," said Ella. "His father should have seen the landing. He brought me this barrel as a present, and he himself thought of bringing his tools and some staves in case Fergus's boat wanted mending, which it did sadly. You will excuse our going on with our work, neighbours, for you know it will not do to lose time in this weather; but the little ones will get you all you want if you will step within. Go, my little maids, and set out the bannocks and the cheese, and I will bring the whisky."

Duff could not stay, however, longer than to settle when to send his pony and panniers for the offal.

"Surely that cannot be little Kenneth!" exclaimed Murdoch, when, guided by the echo of hammering among the rocks, they came in sight of a fine tall lad repairing a boat. "Yes, it is Kenneth, so like his father, and just as handsome!"

Kenneth looked modestly happy when his uncle declared that he did not want to purchase Murdoch's boat, as he believed his own would be the best of the two by the time Kenneth went back to Islay.

Murdoch wondered why his children gave nothing but trouble while they were young, and did little but damage now that they were grown up, while other people made a profit of theirs. He took a poor price, paid in produce, from a cottager for his crazy boat, and went home wishing that he had sent Rob to learn something at the station, as he could teach him nothing at home.

CHAPTER II.

NEIGHBOURLY CHAT.

AT a late hour of this night, the young widow Cuthbert was still busy, as she had been all day, at her employment of net-making. The song with which she lulled her infant to sleep had long ceased, and she pursued her work in perfect silence by the dim light of her solitary lamp; her thoughts were alternately with the children who lay sleeping around her, and with the husband whose place of long repose was beneath the waters. As often as a little hand stirred above the coverlid, or a rosy cheek was turned upon its pillow, the anxious mother gazed and watched, and as often as the gust swept past, or a larger billow broke upon the shingle, her heart throbbed as if she was still awaiting the return of him who should never more return. She started, at length, on hearing a tap at her door.

"It is only Ella," said a voice from the outside; and the widow hastened to open the door.

"Your husband, your husband!" she exclaimed; "no ill to him I trust. You are not in fear for him, Ella?"

"He is safe home, thank Him who guides the storms!" replied Ella: "but it is a gusty night."

"Ye look cold and your plaid drips," said the widow, setting down the lamp, and applying more fuel to her smouldering fire. "What brings ye here so late, Ella?"

"Only a message from Angus about the nets, which I should have left till the morn, but that Kenneth and I saw a glimmer beneath your door, and I knew I should find you at your occupation. We press you too close for your work, Katie. It's an ill thing for sad hearts to watch so late. Better that we should do without our nets, than that you should look as you do now."

"'Tis for my bairns," said Katie, "or I would not undergo it. O, Ella! I have been jealous of you these two hours past, if, as I supposed, you were on the rock looking out."

"No wonder, Katie; and yet I could have found in my heart to be jealous of Fergus's wife, and all the wives that were serving their husbands by the fireside, instead of breasting the wind, and mistaking every jet of the surge for a sail, as I have been doing since the sun went down. But I had Kenneth to while away the time with, and help to keep in the light. He

showed me how they hoist the lanterns at the station, and our signals will be better managed from this night forward. O Katie, you must see Kenneth, and I must tell you all that his uncle has done for him."

"But your husband," interrupted the widow; "how long was he? and in what style did his boat come ashore? and which of you first saw him? and——"

"Now, Katie, why will ye be ever asking such questions as you know it wounds me to answer? I have told you he is home safe. He has brought such a store of fish, that, busy as the curers have been on board, there is as much left for the lassies and me to do to-morrow as we can finish before the twenty-four hours are gone. And that reminds me of the nets: Angus must have those he ordered within three days, he bids me tell you; but let us look about for some one to help you, instead of your toiling with your fingers, and harassing your spirits through the night."

"We must toil while the season lasts," replied Katie; "and as for the wear of spirits," she continued smiling, "that is all fancy, and must be got over. I have nothing now to tremble for—no need to listen and look out, and I must learn not to heed the storm further than to be thankful that my bairns have about them all that makes a storm harmless. If this was a time of hardship, Ella, like some that have been known here, how I might have envied some who were kept watching, not by cold or hunger, but

only by having more employment than they could finish in the day !”

“ It is a rich season, indeed,” said Ella. “ The shoals are such as Angus never saw before, for the multitude and the quality of the fish ; and what is more, the crops are coming up kindly, and farmer Duff says that he reckons on the best harvest he has had since he took the farm.”

“ Thank God !” exclaimed Katie “ This plenty may prevent the price from rising, and nothing else could. It almost frightens me sometimes when I see the numbers that are growing up, to think how we are to get oat and barley meal for them all.”

“ If you had been here all the sixteen years since I first came to this bay,” said Ella, “ you would wonder at the change, and be thankful to see how improvements have risen as wants increased. Now trim your lamp, and go on with your business ; it will be some time yet before my husband and Kenneth have finished with the boat and come for me.—Surely you make your meshes more than an inch wide ;—no, the exact measure.—Well, that is one of the improvements I speak of.”

“ It was folly, indeed,” replied Katie, “ to use such nets as I used to make—nets that caught the fry and let the full grown go free. That was the quickest way to make every season worse than the last. Then there are the boats, so much safer from having pumps, so much more favourable to the fish from being cleaner, and so much better built that our fishers need not lose

their time in short trips, but can push out into the deep seas, and stay many days together. All these things help to make fishing profitable."

"Besides," said Ella, "they help farming, which is of as much importance to us as the fishing. Corn from abroad is so dear, that we should be little better off than before, if farmer Duff did not grow more than Murdoch once did."

"The people in the other islands and in Lorn want all they can grow as much as we," replied Katie, "for their fishery grows with ours. Meat and bannocks are as dear in all the countries round as they were here last year."

"Then we may thank farmer Duff for all the pains he has taken with the soil of his fields and the stock of his pastures. He reaps just double what he reaped fifteen years ago."

"And so he had need, for there are more than double the number of mouths to feed. Besides the strangers that have come to settle, look at the families that have grown up. Where Mr. Callan used to spend a few days now and then, there is Mary Duff's husband and her five bairns; then there are your nine, Ella—how your household is increased!"

"There lies one brother under the gray stone," said Ella, "and Ronald seeks his bannocks elsewhere; but there is Fergus's tribe as well as my own; and setting one against Murdoch's son that died, and another against his daughter that went off with the soldier, there is still more than double the number by far."

“Even supposing,” added Katie, “that Murdoch’s daughter does not come back upon her father with her children, which I have heard is likely. But, Ella, Duff’s farm ought to yield double and double for ever, if it is to go on to feed us, for our children will marry and have their little tribes as we have. If you and I live to be like many grandmothers in these islands, we shall see our twenty or thirty grand-children, and perhaps our eighty or ninety great-grand-children.”

“And then,” replied Ella, “may God keep us from the poverty that weighs on such! May we never see our strong men wasting on shell-fish and weeds, and our aged people dropping cold and hungry into their deathbeds, and our young mothers tending their sickly infants, knowing that food and warmth might save them, and unable to bring them either the one or the other!”

“Do not let us think of it,” said Katie, looking round upon her domestic comforts. “Providence has blessed us thus far, and let us not be too keen to foresee the evil day that man’s power cannot remove.”

Ella was silent. Katie proceeded,—

“Surely man cannot remove that day, Ella, though you say nothing. Let farmer Duff do all he can; let every foot of land be tilled that will nourish an ear of barley, still the day may come; and what else can man do?”

Ella made no direct reply. Presently she observed that Dan and his wife seemed not to care

for the evils of such a time, since they lived by choice on the poorest food, and provided themselves with nothing that they could lose in the worst of seasons.

"They are content, always content," observed the widow; "and they say they have all that is necessary; and they wonder that we can trouble ourselves to obtain anything that is not necessary: but I tell them we do not; I think a chimney, and a window, and bedding, and decent clothes all necessary for the children."

"Unless you would have them live like pigs in a sty," observed Ella. "When God gave us the charge of these little ones, he gave us no leave that ever I heard of to expose them to sickness and hardship, and to corrupt them by letting them live like brutes. By making them helpless and quick in their feelings, he has shown as plainly as if he sent a prophet to tell us, that we are to tend them as carefully and keep them as innocent as ever our labour and forethought can help us to do. Whenever I see a little one grovelling in dirt, or pining in want, or given to vice such as it should not even have heard of, I always feel as if God's plain-spoken message had been at some time misunderstood; either that the trust has been wrongly undertaken or wrongly managed."

"I knew you thought so, Ella; and yet what can we say when parents see and mourn all this, and cannot help themselves?"

"We can only say that if both father and mother have considered and judged for the best,

and worked hard, and denied themselves, no fault rests with them. Where the fault lies in such a case is a thing that Angus and I have talked over many a time. But such a case does not concern those we were speaking of—those who are content with destitution, when they might have comfort.”

The widow looked on her children and sighed.

“Nay,” said Ella, smiling, “there is no need for you to sigh. You might carry your bairns to Inverary, and match them with the duke’s, and not a stronger, or fairer, or more innocent would you find among them all.”

“May it please Providence to keep them so!”

“Why should you fear? You have comfort about you, and a prospect of abundance. Keep your tears for a darker day, if there be such in the years to come.”

“Every day is dark to me now,” thought the widow; but she kept down a feeling that seemed ungrateful. Ella went on, anxious to cheer her.

“I watched your little Hugh this morning, as he and my younger ones were playing on the sands, and I thought he looked as if he was made to carry his own way through the world. You should have seen him managing the dragging of the pool with the ragged net Angus gave the children. You would have thought he had been to the station to take a lesson of the superintendent, by his direction of the rest.”

“Aye, I am afraid he is overbearing,” replied the mother.

“Not at all; only spirited. If you keep him

innocent with such a spirit as he has, he may be anything; he may be like Ronald himself, who is so fond of him. O, he is not overbearing. I saw him let go the net the moment little Bessie was frightened at your dog that jumped upon her; and he carried her through the water that was too deep for her to wade, as soon as ever she began to cry for me. Now I think of it, Ronald did take him to the station once, surely."

"Yes; not very long ago, the last time he was here; and Hugh saw the superintendent as you suppose, and has been full of imitation of all that he saw ever since."

"He may be superintendent himself some day or other, Katie. But does not he love Ronald very much?"

"Very much; as he ought to do."

"All my children do," replied Ella. "It is always a happy time when uncle Ronald comes. The same man that the officers respect above all who are under them is as much beloved by the little ones as if he were a soft-hearted girl."

"You had the making of Ronald, and I give you joy of your work," said the widow.

"Ah, Katie, that is the way you always silence me about Ronald," said Ella, smiling.

"Well, then, tell me about Fergus: he is your work too."

"You know all I can say about him," said Ella, sighing. "You know my pride in him, and that this very pride makes me the more grieved when I see his temper harassed and soured by care, as I feel it must go on to be."

more and more. I am always in dread of a quarrel with one neighbour or another; and more than ever now, in the high fishing season."

"Surely he has less care now than at other times," observed the widow. "There is just now abundance for every body."

"True; but this is the time for revenge. If Fergus has carried himself high towards any neighbour, or given the sharp words that are never forgotten, now is the time for his nets to be cut, or his boat set adrift, or what he has fished in the day carried off in the night."

"There are those in Garveloch, I know," said Katie, "who can bring themselves to do such things."

"Let us mention no names, Katie; but thus it is that men shame their race, and spurn the gifts they little deserve. To think that we cannot enjoy a plentiful season in peace and thankfulness, but that some must injure, and others complain! These are times when we should leave it to the osprey to follow a prey, and to the summer storms to murmur. Hark! there is Angus's step outside; and time it is, for it cannot be far from midnight."

The widow invited Angus in to warm himself by her now bright fire; but it was time for rest. Kenneth had gone home an hour before.

"He would find supper on the board," said Ella; "and now, Angus, you will be glad to do the same."

Katie promised the nets within three days; and as soon as she had closed the door behind

her guests, sat down again for one other hour to help the fulfilment of her promise, and then slept all the better for having watched till the wind went down.

CHAPTER III.

KINDRED NOT KINDNESS.

It was not very long before Ella's fears on account of her brother Fergus were in part realized, though the evil day was deferred by an arrangement offered by Angus and eagerly accepted by his brother-in-law. The herring fishery being peculiarly abundant this year, Angus wanted more help on board his vessel; and as it was expected that the cod would be plentiful in proportion, Angus might in his turn assist Fergus, when the herring shoals were past, and the cod which follow to make prey of them should become the chief object of the fishery. Fergus laboured from July to October for a certain share of the herring produce; and Angus was to go out with Fergus in all the intervals of his coasting trips during the late autumn and winter. While Fergus was on board Angus's vessel, all went well; for Angus had no enemies. He might spread his nets to dry on the beach, and his youngest child was guard enough to set over them. He never left his fish on board all night, while he was at home, think-

ing it wrong to put such a temptation to theft in the way of any one; but if he had, no harm would have been done out of malice to himself, as was too frequently the practice in this fishery.

Poor Fergus was not so secure, as he had found before, and was destined to find again. Like most men of hasty tempers, who are besides subject to care, he had enemies among those who did not know how to make allowance for him, and were not disposed to forgive harsh expressions which the offender was apt to forget that he had used. Dan, easy and content as he seemed to be, had the selfishness common to lazy people; and there is no more inveterate enemy to good-will than selfishness. Dan was not, like many of his countrymen, ready with his oaths and his cudgel at a moment's warning, if anything went amiss; but Dan could drawl out the most provoking things imaginable, and enjoy their effect upon an irritable person, and show that he enjoyed it; and having thus encouraged a quarrel, in which he did not give his adversary the satisfaction of bearing his share heartily, he let it drop; but had no objection to see it carried on by somebody else. He amused himself with watching what befel Fergus, and with laughing at every little distress which arose subsequent to a certain dispute which had once occurred between them. He did no harm with his own hands, but people knew that he did not object to seeing it done; and such sympathy affords great advantage to the doers of mischief. Among these was Rob Murdoch, a doer of mis-

chief by nature as some said,—at all events by habit, and very often by express will. Rob had never felt at ease with Ella or any of the family since the day of his upsetting the boat; though there was never a look or word from any of them which could have made him uncomfortable, if his own consciousness had not. He was always ready to suppose offence, and found no difficulty in creating it where he was not liked, and only tolerated on account of long neighbourhood and distant relationship. He kept out of Ella's way, for he was mightily afraid of her. He hated Angus, having been formerly taught by his father that Angus was a traitor who intended to supplant him, and the impression remained on his stupid mind long after the cause had been removed. Ronald was out of his way entirely; and Fergus was therefore the only one exposed to his poor spite, while he was the one least able to disregard it. The time had been when Fergus would have scorned the idea of being moved by anything Rob could say; but Fergus was more easily moved than formerly, and it stung him to hear Rob predict, as he lounged on the shore, that the wind would be contrary when Fergus wished it fair; to be met on his return from an unsuccessful expedition with the news that everybody else had caught a vast deal of fish; and, above all, to see the enemy fretting the children into a passion, which was a frequent pastime of Rob's when he had nothing better to do. Out of these provocations arose quarrels; and out of quarrels, Rob's de-

sire of revenge ; a desire which he could gratify only in a small way as long as Fergus worked for his brother-in-law. Rob asked several times for the loan of Fergus's boat during the herring season ; and as he made the request in his father's name, it was not refused ; but when it was found that the boat received some injury each time, Fergus very reasonably desired Rob to repair the mischief as often as he caused it. Being too lazy to do this, the loan was denied to him, and then he made bold to use the boat without leave when he knew that Fergus was absent ; and the exclamations of the children having brought their mother out to see what was the matter, the ill-will was not lessened by the addition of a woman's tongue. No terms were kept after the railing bout between Rob and Janet on the sands : they regarded and acted towards each other as enemies from that day forward.

Angus offered Fergus a benefit, as he called it, to finish off the season with ; that is, all the fish caught in the last trip were to be Fergus's ; and to the winnings of this trip he looked for the means of finally making up his rent, and of improving the clothing of the children before the winter. The signs of the weather were anxiously watched by himself and his family, the nets were carefully repaired, the casks looked to, more salt brought in from the station, and every preparation completed the evening before, when the nets and stores were carried on board, and all made ready for starting at dawn. It was a

misty morning, such as would not have tempted either Janet or Ella abroad if this had been any other trip than the last of the season: but as it was, they attended their husbands down to the shore, with their children flocking about them. As it was too foggy to let them see the vessel at fifty yards distance from the beach they presently returned, walking so slowly, that before they reached home the mists had partly dispersed at the appearance of the rising sun, and opened a prospect along the shore.

"There's Rob turning the point," cried one of the little ones.

"Rob at this time of the morning? Impossible!" said Ella. "They that have no more to do than he are not stirring so early. It is he, however. Look, Janet, how he peeps at us from behind the rock! I will go and speak with him, for he has no quarrel with me, and I do not forget we are cousins."

It was not so easy, however, to catch him. When he saw Ella approaching, he withdrew from sight; and when she turned the point, he was already high up among the rocks, on a path which he could not have reached without exercising more activity than was his wont.

"I believe the man thinks," said Ella to herself, "as Mr. Callum used to do, that I am a witch, for he flees me as a fowl flees the hawk. If I could but win his ear for half an hour, there might be an end of this ill-will between him and Fergus, which is a scandal to relations, and to those who, living far from war, ought to live in peace."

Where enmity once creeps in, it is difficult to preserve peace with any of the parties concerned. After having missed Rob, Ella found that Janet was offended at her having sought him; and it was with some difficulty that she brought her sister-in-law to acknowledge that a quarrel has done quite enough mischief when it separates two families, and that no advantage can arise from its involving a third.

Before many hours had elapsed, the children came running to their mother, crying—

“The boat! the boat! She is warping into the Bay. Father will be on shore presently.”

“It cannot be our boat!” said Ella, turning pale, however, as she spoke. “It must be one of the station boats.”

A glance showed her that it was indeed her husband's vessel coming in already, instead of three or four days hence, as she had expected. Her only way of accounting for this quick return was by supposing that some accident had happened on board. The wind was contrary, so that it must be some time before the crew could land, and Ella was not disposed to wait for tidings. She commanded her children not to go out and tell Janet, who, being busy within doors, might not know of the return; and then went down to the place where Murdoch's old boat was lying, obtained a hasty leave to use it and help to launch it, seized the oars and pushed off, and was presently alongside her husband's vessel. Fergus was already half over the side, ready to jump down to his sister, and impatient to gain

the shore, while Angus in vain attempted to hold him back.

“Push off, Ella!” cried Angus. “Do not come near till I bring him to reason.”

Seeing that her husband and brother were both safe, Ella repressed her anxiety to know what had happened, and by one vigorous pull shot off out of Fergus’s reach. He threw himself back into the vessel, and trod the little deck like one in a towering passion.

“My husband! my brother!” cried Ella, in a tone which reached the hearts of both, “you have not quarrelled?”

“O no! nor ever shall,” said Angus, laying his hand on Fergus’s shoulder, “and least of all this day.”

“Do you think I could fall out with Angus?” said Fergus. “No! I must be sunk indeed before I could do that. It is he who has kept me from ruin till now, and it is he who would make me think I am not ruined to-day.”

Ruined!—The truth was soon told. Fergus’s nets were destroyed. They had been safe the night before. This morning, when he was preparing to throw them, he found them cut almost to shreds. If he had had money to buy more, they could not be provided in time. The season was over; his benefit was lost; and with it went all hopes of making up his rent by the day it would become due, and of supplying the additions he had proposed to the comforts of his little ones.

Ella’s suspicions lighted upon Rob even before she heard Fergus declare that it could be nobody

else. A sudden thought having struck her, she came alongside once more, and having communicated with her husband in a tone which Fergus could not overhear, she again departed, shaping her course for Murdoch's dwelling.

Rob was lying on the beach asleep, as she expected; and beside him was Dan, also asleep. If they had been awake, they would not have seen Angus's vessel which was now behind the point to their right. Ella stepped on shore and wakened Rob, saying,

"I see you have no business of your own this bright noon, Rob; so come and take an oar with me."

Rob started up when he saw who was standing over him. He wished his tall cousin far over seas, or anywhere but at his elbow.

"Ask Dan," said he. "Dan! here's my cousin Ella wants a trip. Take an oar with her, will ye?"

"No," replied Ella. "Let Dan finish his dream."

"Meg is stouter than I at the oar," pleaded Rob.

"It is you that I want, and that this moment," said Ella, pointing his way to the boat, towards which Rob shuffled unwillingly, like a school-boy going in search of the rod with which he is to be whipped.

Instead of giving him an oar, Ella took both; and as he sat opposite her with nothing to do, he felt very silly, and this feeling was a bad preparation for what was to follow. When they

were fairly beyond the breakers, Ella rested on her oars, and, looking her companion full in the face, asked him where he had passed the previous night. Rob looked up to the sky, back to the shore, and around upon the waters, and then scratching his head, asked,

“What was that ye said, cousin Ella?”

“You heard what I said.”

“Well; where should I have passed the night?”

“That is for you to answer. I ask again where you were when the moon set last night?”

Rob shuffled in his talk as well as in his gait. He told how he oftentimes spent his time on the rocks rather than bear the smell of putrid fish under his father's roof; and how Meg had foretold a bad night, and it turned out fine; and many other things that had nothing to do with Ella's question. She let him go on till, by turning the point, they came in sight of the *Flora* standing south-west. She directed his attention to it, saying that the *Flora* was her object. Rob swore a deep oath and demanded to be set on shore again, cursing himself for having come without knowing whither he was to be taken. Ella's steady eye was still upon him when she asked the reason of this sudden horror of meeting his cousins and boarding their boat: adding,

“I fancy it is not so very long since you were on board the *Flora* of your own accord.”

Rob had sense enough to see that he only betrayed himself by showing eagerness to get back, and therefore held his peace till they approached the *Flora*, when he hailed Angus, requesting him

to help Ella on board ; and then said to his companion,

“ I’ll take the boat straight back with pleasure, cousin, with your thanks, I suppose, to Duncan Hogg for the use of it.”

“ Not yet,” said Ella ; “ I have more to say to you. Now, Rob, tell me honestly whether you were at home all last night, and here the mischief may end ; but if you will not give an account to us, you must to the magistrate at the station. If you are innocent you can have no objection to clear yourself ; if you are guilty, depend upon it you will meet with more mercy from your cousins than from a stranger who comes to execute justice ? ”

“ As sure as ever anything happens, you always suspect me,” muttered Rob. “ What care I what happens to Fergus, or what he makes of his benefit ? ”

“ O then, you know what has happened,” observed Ella, “ and yet I have not told you.”

Rob, finding that he only gave new occasion of suspicion by everything he said, took refuge in sullen silence, got on board at Ella’s command, and sat immovably looking at the sea as they steered for Islay, having fastened the little boat to the stern of the Flora.

Rob’s courage or obstinacy failed him when the station became visible, the white house of Mr. M’Kenzie, the magistrate, appearing at some little distance above and behind the pier, the cooperage, the curing house and the village. Ella, who watched an opportunity of saving the

culprit from a public exposure, was by his side the moment he showed an inclination to speak.

"If ye will only just say ye are willing to make reparation, and will never play such an unkind prank again," said she, "I will intercede with Fergus to forgive you."

"What may be the cost of the nets?"

"More than you can make up without hard work; but it may be made up; and I would fain set ye home, Rob, without having seen the magistrate's face."

Rob muttered that he did not see why he should be brought to justice more than others that did the same trick. It was but a prank; and when they were boys and no magistrate within reach, nobody talked of justice.—Ella reminded him that Mr. Callum had united all the offices of law and justice in his own person when the island was inhabited by few except themselves; but that circumstances had now changed, and relations multiplied, and that property must be protected from the player of pranks as well as from the thief.

Fergus, touched by the kindness of his brother and sister, controlled his passion, and received Rob's submission with more grace than it was tendered with, agreeing to take compensation as the offender should be able to give it, provided nets could be obtained at the station on promise of future payment.

CHAPTER IV.

LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER.

NONE of the party left the station without having seen the face of the magistrate. He was in the store-house when Fergus went to make his application for nets.

“What makes you want so many feet of netting at once?” asked Mr. Mackenzie; “and in such a hurry too. I hope yours have not been destroyed?”

“Indeed but they have, your honour; and another such loss would destroy me.”

“The law must be put in force in its utmost rigour,” declared the magistrate;—whereupon Rob hastily withdrew to the cooperage, where he might be out of sight. “Scarcely a day passes,” continued Mr. Mackenzie, “without information of some act of violence or another. How do you suppose this happens, Mr. Angus?”

“Through jealousy, I believe, sir. We seldom hear of thefts——”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Angus. I have had several complaints within a few days of depredations on the fishing grounds in the lochs where the cod are just showing themselves.”

“I rather think even these thefts must arise from revenge more than from a desire of gain; for there is or ought to be no want at present through the whole extent of the fishery. Some, like my brother Fergus, are reduced to difficulty

by the destruction of their implements; but in such a season as this, there can be no absolute distress for any who are willing to work."

"I scarcely know which is the most painful," replied the magistrate; "to see men snatching bread out of one another's mouths through jealousy and spite, or under the impulse of pressing want. The worst of it is, the last usually follows the first. This enemy of your brother's, who has been injuring him now without a pretence, may plead starvation in excuse for some other act of violence hereafter."

"I trust you are mistaken, sir," replied Angus. "I trust the miseries of poverty that I have seen elsewhere are far from our shores."

"The first sign of their approach, Angus, is when men begin to fancy their interests opposed to each other,—which the interests of men in society can never be. Fair competition leads to the improvement of the state of all; but the jealousy which tempts to injure any interest whatever is the infallible token that distress is at hand. You have seen enough of the world to know this to be a general truth, Angus. Why do you dispute it in the present case?"

"Perhaps my own interest in the issue blinds me," returned Angus. "I have seen enough in other countries of what you describe to make me melancholy when I witness men pulling one another's fortunes to pieces instead of building up the prosperity of the whole by labouring together at that of every part. Whether I hear of different classes in a commercial country peti-

tioning for impediments to be thrown in one another's way, or see (as I saw in Canada) jealous neighbours levelling one another's fences in the dark, or laying siege to them in the day-time, I feel sure that destruction is ready to step in and beggar them all, whether it be in the shape of a prohibitory duty imposed by government, or of wild cattle that come to trample down the corn on which the quarrellers depend."

"You once told us of some who united to make a road," said Ella, who had now joined her husband. "That was wiser than pulling down fences."

"Where all helped to give each other the fair advantage of a road," replied her husband, "a flourishing settlement presently arose among the fertile fields. Where the fences were levelled, there was soon no need of fences. Some who had dwelt within them lay under the sod, hunger having cut short their days, and others were gone in search of food, leaving their fields to grow into a wilderness once more."

"Theirs was indeed the lowest degree of folly that can be conceived."

"Not quite," observed Mr. Mackenzie. "I can fancy a lower, though I do not ask you to receive it as fact. This letting in of wild cattle to trample the corn took place when but few wanted to be fed, and those few had immediate resources. If, instead of this act of folly, the perpetrators had waited till hundreds and thousands were in expectation, with an appetite which the most ample harvests could not satisfy, and

had set fire to the produce at the very season when it was most wanted, under the idea of vexing the holders of the land, what would you say then ?

“ There is nothing to be said, sir, but that such would be an act of mere madness,—too evidently madness to be committed by more than an individual, and that individual an escaped maniac.

“ The school of ignorance is the innermost court of Bedlam,” replied Mr. Mackenzie ; “ and while there are any patients remaining in it, it is possible that corn-stacks may be burned by discontented people with the notion of revenging the wrongs of the starving. But I put it only as a possibility, you know.—Can it be, Angus, that you do not see the tendency of the acts of violence that are disturbing this very district ? Do you not see distress and ruin in full prospect if they are not checked, and if, moreover, the temper of the people be not directly reversed ? ”

“ Our resources are so improved that I would fain hope the best ; and yet our numbers increase in full proportion, so that we had not need waste any of our capital.”

“ I think not indeed. I have been visiting every station on the coast and in the islands, and I find the same state of things everywhere,—a prosperity so unusual in these districts, that the people think their fortune secure for ever, while they are hastening, by every possible means, the approach of distress.”

“ I hope you find the farms and pastures im-

proving with the fishery?" observed Angus.—
"Everything depends upon the food keeping pace with the employment."

"The farms are improving to the utmost that skill and labour can make them improve. There is the powerful stimulus of an increasing demand, while there are increasing facilities of production. There is more manure, there are better implements, and more cattle; so that some farms produce actually double what they did when the fishery began."

Angus shook his head, observing that this was not enough.

"They have done their best already in the way of increase," said he. "They may be improved for some time to come, and to a great degree; but each improvement yields a less return: so that they will be further and further perpetually from again producing double in ten years; and all this time the consumers are increasing at a much quicker rate."

"Not double in ten years surely?" said Ella.

"Certainly not; but say twenty, thirty, fifty, a hundred, any number of years you choose;—still, as the number of people doubles itself for ever, while the produce of the land does not, the people must increase faster than the produce. If corn produced corn without being wedded to the soil, the rate of increase might be the same with that of the human race. Then two sacks of barley might grow out of one, and two more again out of each of those two—proceeding from one to two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, and so on."

“ If capital could be made to increase in this way, I see, Angus, that there could never be too many people in the world, or in our little world, Garveloch.”

“ Or if, on the other hand, human production could be kept down to the same rate with the production of our fields, we need have no fear of a deficiency of food. If the number of producers increased only in proportion to the increase of food, there would be no distress of the kind our islands were formerly afflicted with, and may be afflicted with again. But nobody thinks of establishing such a proportion ; and in the meanwhile, food is yielded, though in larger quantities, in less and less proportions, while the eaters go on doubling and doubling their numbers perpetually.”

“ Then, to be sure, it is madness to destroy one another's means of living,” cried Ella. “ It seems the first duty of everybody to increase the production of food ; and yet, here we are, cutting one another's nets to pieces, and driving the fish away on which we depend for our subsistence !”

“ You do not wonder now,” said Mr. Mackenzie, “ at my grief for the ignorance of the people, and my disgust at the quarrels that have such consequences. I assure you the season is actually lost in some of the northern lochs ; for, not only are some fishers left without nets or lines, but the fish have made no stay, being alarmed by tumult ; and it is but too probable that they will not return.”

“ And all this time,” continued Angus, “ these

very quarrellers go on marrying early, and raising large families—that is, they bring offspring into the world while they are providing as fast as possible for their future starvation.”

“There is no need to do here as the Romans did,” said Mr. Mackenzie, “and as many other nations have done—no need to offer bounties for the increase of population.”

“I think not indeed,” said Ella. “It seems a thing to be checked, rather than encouraged.”

“All depends on time and circumstances, Ella. When Noah and his little tribe stepped out of the ark into a desolated world, the great object was to increase the number of beings, who might gather and enjoy the fruits which the earth yielded, in an abundance overpowering to the few who were there to consume. And the case is the same with every infant nation which is not savage.”

“Savages do not value or subsist upon the fruits of the earth so much as upon the beasts of the field,” said Ella;—“at least so Angus told me of those who have retreated from before us in America.”

“Savages care for little beyond supplying the pressing wants of the moment,” replied Angus. “They make no savings; they have no capital; and their children die off as fast as poverty and disease can drive them out of the world. There is no growth of either capital or population among savages.”

“Those have indeed a poor chance for life and health,” said Mr. Mackenzie, “whose pa-

rents feed at the best on raw roots and berries, who sometimes keep themselves alive by swallowing grubs and worms, and at other times fast for a week together. Shrunk, deformed, and weakly themselves, their offspring are little likely to survive a scarcity, even if it were possible to rear them under the most favourable circumstances."

"It is absurd," said Angus, "to doubt the rate at which the human race increases on account of the decrease of numbers among savages. The whole question is concerning the proportion which capital and population bear to each other; and it cannot therefore be tried where no capital exists."

"I suppose," observed Ella, "that flocks and herds are the first capital which a tribe possesses in any large quantity. How do numbers increase among people who seek pasture but do not till the ground?"

"Such tribes are most numerous where pastures are fine, and weak where the natural produce of the earth is scanty. But each continues a tribe, and cannot become a nation while following a pastoral life. Their flocks cannot multiply beyond a certain point unless the food of the flocks is increased; and they who subsist upon the flocks cannot, in like manner, multiply beyond a certain point, unless the flocks on which they feed are multiplied."

"But they not only do not increase," observed Mr. Mackenzie, "they are lessened perpetually by one or another of the unfortunate accidents to which their condition subjects them.

Pastoral tribes are particularly prone to war. Instead of keeping possession of a certain territory on which they always dwell, they rove about from one tract of country to another, leaving undefended some which they call their own;—another tribe takes possession; and then comes a struggle and a destructive war, which reduces their numbers. Many of these tribes live in a state of continual hostility, and therefore dwindle away.”

“But when they begin to settle and till the ground,” said Ella, “I suppose their numbers increase again.”

“Yes; the Jews, after they were established in Canaan, became an agricultural nation, and multiplied very rapidly. It was made, both by their laws and customs, a point of duty to marry and to marry young; and when the check of war was removed, their small territory became very thickly peopled.”

“I suppose it was to repair the waste of war,” said Ella, “that the bounty on population was offered among the Romans.”

“Not only from this cause,” replied Mr. Mackenzie, “but to repair the breaches made in other ways. In the early days of Rome, the population was too large for the capital in intervals of peace, as appears from the law of their king Romulus, that no child should be exposed to die in the desert before three years of age—a proof that it had been the previous practice to expose children under that age. In after times—in the days of Roman glory—the population

was apt to decrease, even in times of peace, from the faults in the distribution of property. The land had fallen into the hands of a few great proprietors, and was not tilled by free labour. Swarms of slaves were brought in from all conquered countries, and they alone were employed where free labour should have claimed a share of labour and reward; and there was therefore no subsistence for a middling and lower class of free people. Their numbers dwindled so as to alarm their rulers and give occasion to express laws for the encouragement of population. If, instead of passing laws to promote early marriages, and offering privileges to those who had a certain number of children, the Roman emperors had allowed liberty to the people they governed to labour and subsist, there would have been no complaint of a deficiency of numbers, but rather an inquiry, as there is among us, how all that are born are to be fed?"

"But do you mean, sir," said Angus, "that there were not children born to the lower classes of the Romans, or that they were born and died through want?"

"Multitudes that were born died immediately, from being exposed; and besides this, marriage was less practised during these ages of the Roman empire than among the same number of people in any other country."

"The laws were not of much use then."

"And how can we wonder, when it was actually the custom to give away corn gratis to thousands upon thousands who had no means of earning

it! What inducement has a man to marry, when he must either expose his children, or see them die at home, or take his chance of a gratuitous dole of food for them? The laws, if they acted at all, would not act upon these large classes, but upon those of a higher rank, who would marry if there were no law."

"If in any country," observed Ella, "there are no laws to encourage or to check marriage, it seems as if that country ought to afford a fair example of the natural increase of numbers."

"Nay," said her husband, "human laws have little influence in this case, while the natural laws which regulate the production of life and of capital are seldom suffered to act unchecked. Leave the people of any country as free as you please to marry or not as they like, still, if capital is controlled in any way, the population is controlled also."

"Where then," inquired Ella, "does capital act the most freely? Where in the world may we see an example of the natural proportions in which men and subsistence increase?"

"There has never been an age or country known," replied Mr. Mackenzie, "where at once the people have been so intelligent, their manners so pure, and their resources so abundant, as to give the principle of increase an unobstructed trial. Savage life will not do, because the people are not intelligent. Colonies will not do, because they are not free from vicious customs. An old empire will not do, because the means of subsistence are restricted."

“ A new colony of free and intelligent people in a fertile country affords the nearest approach to a fair trial,” observed Angus. “ In some of the best settlements I saw in America, the increase of capital and of people went on at a rate that would scarcely be believed in an old country.”

“ And that of the people the fastest, I suppose ? ”

“ Of course ; but still capital was far a-head, though the population is gaining upon it every year. When the people first went, they found nothing but capital—all means of production and no consumers but themselves. They raised corn in the same quantity from certain fields every year. There was too much corn at first in one field for a hundred mouths ; but this hundred became two, four, eight, sixteen hundred, and so on, till more and more land was tilled, the people still spreading over it, and multiplying perpetually.”

“ And when all is tilled and they still multiply,” said Ella, “ they must improve their land more and more.”

“ And still,” said Angus, “ the produce will fall behind more and more, as every improvement, every outlay of capital yields a less return. Then they will be in the condition of an old country like England, where many are but half fed, where many prudent determine not to marry, and where the imprudent must see their children pine in hunger, or waste under disease till they

are ready to be carried off by the first attack of illness."

"May this never be the case in Garveloch!" cried Ella.

"The more waste of capital there is," said Mr. Mackenzie, "the sooner will that day come."

"But our islands are now in the state of a new colony, like that Angus was speaking of," said Ella. "Want must be far from us at present."

"Except that we have not a fertile soil or a good climate," replied her husband. "It is true we do not depend entirely on corn;—we had not need for our home supply can never be large. We have the resource of fish, but it is so precarious a resource, that we ought to keep some means of subsistence in reserve. If the herrings should desert us for a season or two, and the harvest fail, some of us must starve, or all be half-starved, unless we have a stock in reserve."

"Poor Fergus!" exclaimed Ella. "No wonder he was grieved and angry this morning! Five children and no capital stored up! He may well watch the seasons and tremble at a storm."

"I am sorry," observed Mr. Mackenzie, "that he will not give up the name of the offender who has injured him. It is necessary to the public safety that this wanton destruction of property should be put an end to; and I give it in charge to you, Angus, to see that full compensation is

made, or that the culprit is delivered into my hands to be made an example of. If it had been generally known that I am here to administer the law, I would not have yielded this much; but as I have only just arrived, and am but beginning to make known the law, I do not insist on an information being laid this time. Henceforward I always shall; for connivance at an offence is itself an offence."

CHAPTER V

MORE HASTE THAN GOOD SPEED.

FERGUS meanwhile was consulting Ronald as to the best mode in which Rob's labour could be applied towards repairing the damage he had caused. He was too stupid and awkward to be entrusted with any occupation in which he would not be overlooked by some more competent person; and Ronald knew, though he did not say so, that there would be perpetual danger of a quarrel if Rob became Fergus's assistant in fishing. Ronald, therefore, kindly offered to give Rob some inferior employment about the cooperage, providing for his support out of his wages, and paying the rest over to Fergus till the whole debt should be cleared. Rob, to whom all labour was disagreeable alike, sulkily consented, and swore at himself and everybody else when he

saw the Flora clear out from the little harbour, and leave him behind to repair by the labour of weeks and months the mischief he had done in two short hours. He had not only the cost of the nets to pay, but the amount which Fergus would have cleared by the benefit he was now prevented from taking.

While he was involuntarily saving during this winter, his neighbours in Garveloch were going on as variously as might be expected from the difference in their knowledge, in their desires, and in their habits. The Company was prosperous in a very high degree, and so, therefore, might their labourers of every rank have been; but in this society, as in all, some were wise and some were foolish; some provided for a time of darkness, and some did not.

None were more provident than Angus and Ella, or provident in a wiser manner. Seeing so clearly as they did the importance of an increase of capital in a society which was adding to its numbers every day, they reflected and consulted much on the modes and rates of increase of capital differently applied, and saw that the interest of the Company, and of every individual employed by it, was one and the same. Since capital grows from savings only, there seemed no hope that that of the Company should keep pace with the demands upon it; but something might be done by increasing the value of the capital,—by making it secure, by lessening the attendant expenses, by using every possible method of making production easy and rapid. If

all the corn that was raised in the islands had been used for seed-corn, instead of nine-tenths of it being eaten ; if all the fish had been turned into its market-price on the spot, without any expense of curing, packing, and conveying, this capital would still have doubled itself much more slowly than the number of people who were to subsist upon it ; and when their subsistence and all attendant expenses were subtracted, the process became much slower. Yet it was a favourable time and a favourable set of circumstances for capital to grow in. The property was secure, being under the protection of law well administered, and under the management of an united body of directors. The expenses were small, the position of the different stations being advantageous, and the required apparatus very simple. Production was at the same time easy ; for the herrings came regularly, and the seasons had thus far been favourable. Here, then, capital might grow, if ever or anywhere ; and it did grow ; but the demands upon it grew still faster ; and therefore Angus and Ella guarded the capital of their employers as if it had been their own, while they added to their private store as fast as was consistent with a due enjoyment of the fruits of their labour. Though they had nine children, they were at present in more favourable circumstances for saving than some of their neighbours who had few or none. Dan and his Noreen, for instance, saved nothing ; how should they, when their hut scarcely protected them from the rain and snow, or their

clothing from the chilling winds,—when there was not even the slightest preparation made for the tender little one that was soon to come into their charge? There can be no saving expected from those whose commonest wants are not supplied. The Murdochs were in nearly as poor a condition; and since they had never managed to avoid sinking, even in their best days, it was scarcely likely that they should now. Fergus toiled and toiled, and just continued to keep his place in the little society, but he could do no more. The consumption of his family just equalled the supply afforded by his labour, so that he could not, with all his efforts, set apart anything to begin saving upon. His nest-egg (whenever he thought he had one) had always disappeared before the day was out. There was nothing for it, but hoping that good seasons and full employment would last till his boys' labour should more than equal their consumption, and should not only release him from the charge of their maintenance, but assist in the support of the little ones, who must be nearly helpless for years to come.

If this society had been constituted like that of Rome, of which we have spoken, there would have been little or no saving, and therefore no provision for an increase in the number of its members. Where society is composed of a few very rich people and a multitude very poor, the least saving of all is made. The rich only *can* save in such a case, and they do not perceive a sufficient motive for doing so. They reckon on

being always rich, and do not see why they should not enjoy their wealth to the utmost, year by year. Where society is composed of a few moderately rich and many sufficiently supplied with necessaries, there is a much better chance of an accumulation of capital, since the majority of the people have then a hope of raising their children to the rank of the moderately rich. They are free from the recklessness of the miserably poor, and from the thoughtless extravagance of the possessors of overgrown wealth. To this middling class belonged Angus, the widow Cuthbert, Ronald and the Duffs; and they therefore made the largest savings in proportion to their earnings. Mr. Mackenzie spent all his income, having no children, and feeling himself provided for for life. The naval superintendent, captain Forbes, a spirited young officer, was so far from attempting to save, that he flung his money about during his flying visits to the stations till he had none left, and barely escaped debt. But Duff, who was not placed beyond the danger of bad seasons, widow Cuthbert, and Angus, who had children dependent on them, and Ronald, who regarded the families of Ella and Fergus with strong affection, had motives to save, and did their full share towards making the capital of the society grow.

One day the next spring, Ronald appeared before his sister's door.

"Welcome, brother!" exclaimed Ella. "Is it a leisure day with you? and are you come to spend it with us?"

“ It is a leisure day, and the last I shall have for long ; and I am come to tell you why, and to consult with Angus about a little business of his. This is the reason that I came myself instead of sending Kenneth.”

“ I began to think you never meant to come, you have been so considerate in sparing Kenneth. But sit ye down,—aye, outside the door if you like, for it is a true spring day,—and Angus will be up from the boat presently.”

Angus was soon seen hastening to meet Ronald, who then told his news. Captain Forbes had arrived at the islay station in high spirits. A new market for their produce was unexpectedly opened in the West Indies. It was his belief that all the fish they could possibly prepare during the season would be insufficient to meet the sudden demand ; and he came to see how many boats could be mustered, and how many labourers could be withdrawn from other employments to aid in the fishery.

“ Now is Fergus’s time,” said Ella, “ for getting his two boys hired at the station. They are young, to be sure ; but as so many labourers are wanted, their services will be received, I dare say.”

“ Now is Rob’s time for clearing off his debt to Fergus,” observed Angus ; “ for I suppose, Ronald, wages will rise at the cooperage. More barrels will be wanted than you can easily prepare.”

“ No doubt,” replied Ronald. “ Now is your time, Angus, for building the platform you were

talking of last year; and I came to offer what help I can. I will spare Kenneth for a week now to work with you; and I give you notice that you must take him now or not at all. And if there should be any difficulty about the little capital wanted for the work, I have a few pounds which are much at your service."

Angus thankfully accepted the offer of his boy's help, but had no occasion to borrow money. He should lose no time, he said, in erecting his platform, if the tidings Ronald brought should prove correct. Much time and labour in lading and unlading his vessel might be economized by the employment of a crane; and he thought he could not invest his savings better than in making such a provision at the commencement of a busier season than had ever been known in Garveloch.

Ella's apprehension was that the demand would be only temporary. On this head Ronald could give her no satisfaction, as he did not know enough of the circumstances to judge: but he thought that all who were called upon to use only their labour, or a small capital which yields a quick return, might rejoice in this sudden prosperity without any fear of consequences; and even Angus's investment of fixed capital would be perfectly safe. If it was doubtful the year before whether the erection of a platform and crane would not be worth while, it could scarcely fail to answer now, when there was to be a large addition to the profits of an ordinary season, even if that addition should be only temporary.

Angus proposed going to the spot to take measurements, and make an estimate of the expense.

"If you will wait till noon is past," said Ella, "I can go with you. I must be taught your plan, Angus, that I may answer for you when you are absent."

Another object in this delay was to set her brother at liberty to go where she knew his heart was all this time. While she was finishing her household business, uncle Ronald went down with some of the little ones to launch a tiny boat,—a present from Kenneth,—in one of the pools on the beach. Their mother heard their shouts of glee, and thought within herself that there were no festival days like those when her brother or her boy came from the station.

In a few minutes the children were playing without their uncle's assistance. He had gone to the widow Cuthbert's. Katie frankly held out her hand as he entered, and bade him welcome to Garveloch. She was just spreading the table for dinner, and invited him to sit down with herself and the children: but when he declined, she made no ceremony, but called the little ones from their play; and the meal went forward as if no guest had been there, except that Katie conversed freely with her friend Ronald.

"Hugh is much grown," observed Ronald. "I did not know him at first when he came to see me land."

"I knew you though," cried Hugh, "and I went to see whether you brought me a tub like

the one you gave Bessie. I want a tub for my fish when I catch any."

"I will make you a tub bigger than Bessie's, and Kenneth shall bring it."

"I wish you would bring it," cried Hugh. "You promised me a boat the last time you came, a long, long while ago, and you never sent it."

"Yes, indeed I did, Hugh, and I thought Kenneth had given it to you."

Katie explained that it had been delivered safe, but had strangely disappeared before Hugh had seen it; and that as he never asked about it, she had not vexed him with explaining what had happened.

"Why did not you ask me for another?" said Ronald. "I do wish you would be free with me as an old friend."

"Indeed I always am," replied Katie. "I would ask a favour of you as easily as of Angus or Fergus."

After a moment's pause, Ronald told his tidings of the prospect of a busy season, and offered to purchase hemp for the widow and send it by Kenneth, before the price should rise, if she had not already a sufficient stock for her net-making for the year. Katie thankfully accepted his services, and looked so cheerfully round upon her children, when she heard of the approaching prosperity, that Ronald was glad he had taken courage to come and tell her.

When the meal was over, Katie took up her employment and seemed far from wishing that

Ronald should go; but she kept little Hugh beside her to show Ronald how he was learning to help his mother in her work.

By the time several subjects of mutual interest had been talked over, Ronald recollected that the hour was long past when he ought to have met Angus on the beach, and he rose to go, offering to look in again in the evening before his departure; to which Katie made no objection.

Dinner was over at Angus's house, but Ella, who guessed where her brother was, would not have him called.—She suspected the truth,—that he came to observe whether there was any chance of his winning Katie at last, and to consult his sister, in case of being unable to discover for himself how Katie felt towards him. He was rather disheartened by the interview. She was so frank and friendly in her manner that he could not believe she felt any of the restraint he laboured under—anything more than the regard which she testified to his sister and brother. Ella could not contradict him. She was far from thinking the case a hopeless one; but she believed that time and patience were still and would long be necessary. She assured her brother that precipitation would probably ruin all; and that his best chance was in quietly waiting till he should have further opportunities of winning upon her. This determined Ronald not to speak at present, as, in his impatience of suspense, he had nearly resolved to do.

When the little party went down to the place where Angus proposed to erect his new building,

several loungers gathered round to watch what was going to be done. Ronald was looked upon as so awfully learned a man, especially when using his rule and frowning over his calculations, that strangers,—such strangers as were in Garveloch,—did not venture to speak to him. They made their inquiries of the children in preference.

First came Noreen lagging along the shore in the gray cloak which she was supposed never to put off, as she had never been seen without it, winter or summer. Wrapt in it, and hanging over her arm, head downwards, was her baby, feebly crying, as usual, and as usual disregarded; for nothing short of a shrill scream seemed to be thought by Noreen worthy of attention. Her cap was nearly the same colour as her cloak, and her hair did not tend to ornament her further than by helping to conceal a black eye.

“Annie, darling, and how busy you all seem! And you nursing the babby as if you'd had one in your arms all your days, my darling.”

“I dare not hold him as you hold your's,” said Annie. “Look! the little thing's face is as black——O look!”

“As black as your eye,” cried Bessie.

“Is it my eye, darling? O, it's a trifle that Dan gave me,—the villain,—when the spirits were in him.”

“What! did Dan strike you?” cried Annie, who was old enough to know that husbands and wives should not fall out like children.

“Strike me, darling! Yes, and the babby too,

O, you should have heard the babby bawl as loud as me."

"Is not Dan very sorry?" asked Annie, coaxing the unfortunate infant.

"Is it sorry the ruffian would be? Not he; and why should he? 'Twas the spirits that made him a villain for the time; but he is the mildest husband of a noon-time that ever was seen. So, darling, don't you go and dream he isn't a good enough man for me. Heaven's blessing on him!—He never bothers me as your father would, Annie. We're just content, without all the measuring and building, and salting and packing, that you have to do at the father's bidding, my darling. What's all this trouble about now?"

Annie was too anxious to defend her father to answer the question immediately; so Noreen turned round to the little ones who were jumping from the ledges of rock.

"And what's all this trouble about, jewels?"

"The captain is coming! the captain is coming!" cried they.

"Is it the captain going to have a new house on Garveloch?" cried Noreen. "O Dan, up to the gentleman as soon as he comes, and get the money others got before you last time; and when ye get it, don't be making a beast of yourself or a martyr of the babby, but remember the rent, jewel."

Dan found it much easier to remember the rent than to pay it, and had rather give his wife a black eye in private than be lectured by her in public; and he therefore looked sulky and bade

her run after the captain if she chose, for that he would not bother himself for any reason in life. —Ella, who had overheard all, explained that there was no reason, as far as the captain was concerned ; but that if Dan would bother himself to go out fishing, the rent would be no longer a trouble.

With all their recklessness and indolence, these people had pride ; and when they heard that everybody was likely to prosper this summer, Noreen began to talk of holding up her head, as she had a right to do, equal to any of them that little thought what her relations were at Rathmullin.

Dan esteemed it mighty provoking that the bread was taken from within his teeth by them that were born to nothing but what they got with their dirty hands. If he had had a word with the captain as soon as others, he might have coaxed him into letting him have a boat ; but it was always the way,—while he was content at home and just thinking of nothing at all, some vagabond or another stepped into his shoes.

Ronald refrained from calling Dan to account for his term of abuse, knowing it to be in such frequent use in Ireland as to have lost much of its offensiveness. He assured Dan that the captain had work for everybody just now, and urged his making application to be hired without delay.

Murdoch stared with astonishment when he found that Angus was actually going to take down his curing-shed and remove it to the place where the stage was to be erected. It seemed to him as well as to Dan vastly too much trouble

and expense; but Angus had taken into account the damage the fish sustain by being much exposed and shifted about previous to curing; and he believed that the expedition and security with which the produce would be hauled up, prepared, and shipped again, would soon repay him for what he was about to do.

The business of months seemed to be transacted in Garveloch this afternoon, on the strength of the tidings which Ronald brought. All doubtful matters (except the one which most nearly concerned Ronald) were brought to a decision. Angus decided, as we have seen, on making a large venture of fixed capital. Farmer Duff decided on hiring some more labourers while there was any chance of his getting them. Fergus decided on offering the labour of his two eldest boys at the station, believing that there would be work for all, however young. More than a few parties decided that their courtship should end in immediate marriage, and never doubted the perfect propriety of making use of a season of prosperity for the purpose. Dan decided on putting his hand to the oar at last. All who wished to hire labour decided on looking abroad for labourers, and betimes, if they wished to make good terms, All who had labour to let began to consider how high they might venture to fix its price.

This was no deceitful promise of prosperity,—to those at least who did not expect too much from it. The sanguine and the ignorant, who are ever ready to take an ell where an inch is given, supposed that their island was enriched

for ever. They heard of wages rising higher and higher, and never suspected they might fall. They saw that the only thing at present wanted was a greater number of labourers, and imagined that when their tribes of children were grown up, all would be right,—wages as high, food as plentiful as now, and as great an increase of employment as there would be of labour. It was well that all did not keep up their expectations to this pitch,—that some were aware how precarious was the present prosperity. A single bad season, the opening of a few more fishing stations, a change in the diet of the West India slaves,—any one of these, or many other circumstances, might reduce the Garveloch fishery to what it had been; while the numbers of those who depended upon it for subsistence were increasing with a greater and a greater rapidity.

The least sanguine, however, could not resist the feeling of exhilaration excited by what passed before their eyes: nor was there any reason that they should. Prudence and foresight do not interfere with the rational enjoyment of blessings; they rather add to it by imparting a feeling of security. The youngest and giddiest could not relish more than Angus and his wife the freedom from care they now enjoyed, the sight of plenty around them, and the knowledge that none need be idle, none need be poor; and if these, the young and the giddy, bestowed little thought on the probable issue of their present state, and escaped the anxiety with which they ought to have regarded the future, neither

did they share the satisfaction of making provision for a season of storms.

The captain alighted in Garveloch, now and then, in his flight round the station. He was always in a prodigious bustle, and he made every body he met as fidgetty as himself about the impossibility of getting labourers enough for the work to be done. Wherever he went, it was suggested to him that people might be hired from some other place, from which other place he had just heard that there was also a deficiency of labour.

Some people thought they might be satisfied with having as large a trade as their numbers could manage; but the captain was not satisfied without taking all that offered. Men and their families were brought from a distance, all the boys that could handle an oar or help to draw a net received wages; all the girls assisted their mothers to cure; so that, at this time, the largest families were the richest. These circumstances acted as an encouragement, and the captain's sanguine expectation that the demand would continue operated as a direct bounty on population; and, in consequence, numbers increased in Garveloch as rapidly as in any new colony of a fertile country.

The seasons which are favourable to the fishery,—in respect of weather,—are favourable to the harvest also. Farmer Duff reaped abundant crops the next two seasons, which unusual abundance just served to feed his customers. What would have been done in case of an

average or an inferior crop having been yielded, few troubled themselves to determine. They had enough, and that was all they cared for.

Kenneth could not often be spared during these two seasons; but he came to attend the christening of a little brother and of two cousins. The only troubles he had to relate were of the difficulty of supplying the orders for barrels, and of the passion the captain was in when fish were spoiled for sale by being packed in old casks. The magistrate had the least to do of anybody. Hard times are the days of crime. There were still occasional quarrels; complaints of oppression on one side and sauciness on the other, and of a few acts of malice still perpetrated by people as stupid and helpless as Rob; but the crimes to which men are stimulated by want were not at present heard of. Were they over for ever?

CHAPTER VI.

A DREARY PROSPECT.

A TIME of leisure, as grievous to the most reckless and indolent as to the superior members of the society, came round ere long. First appeared hardship in the shape of an average crop; for the people having increased their consumption up to the amount of a remarkably abundant

harvest, were of course stinted when the soil yielded only the usual return. No very disastrous consequences followed at first. There was much complaint and a little dismay when it was found that supplies must not be looked for from the neighbouring districts, since there also the season had been only moderately favourable, and there were mouths enough to feed in each place to leave no supplies over for Garveloch. The Garveloch people therefore were obliged to eat some of their fish instead of selling it, and to pay a very high price for their barley and oatmeal. Those who were able to give this price were willing to do it, seeing that the rise of price was a necessary consequence of the comparative scarcity; that farmer Duff must pay himself for the outlay on his land, whether its produce were ample or scanty; and that its dearth alone could make the supply last till the next harvest came round. Those who were too poor to buy abused the farmer, saying that his crop was not scantier than it had been in many former years when he had sold it much cheaper, and that he was making use of a dispensation of Providence to fill his own pocket. They were slow to perceive that it was themselves and not the farmer who had made the change; that they had caused the increase of demand and the consequent rise of price.

It would have been well if nothing worse than the occurrence of an average season had happened. The number of people brought by a sudden demand for labour might have lessened.

Some might have departed elsewhere, and others have devised plans for a new introduction or better economy of food; and after a short period of hardship, the demand for food might have gradually accommodated itself to the supply; for their society was not like the population of an overgrown district, where there may be mistakes in ascribing effects to causes, and where the blame of hardship may be laid in the wrong place. The people of Garveloch might survey their little district at a glance, and calculate the supply of provision grown, and count the numbers to be fed by it, and by this means discern, in ordinary circumstances, how they might best manage to proportion their resources of labour and food. But if any had endeavoured to do this, their expectations would have been baffled by the event, unless they had taken into the account the probability of bad seasons—a probability which the truly wise will never overlook.

A few seasons after the period of prosperity of which we have spoken, the dawn of a June morning broke as gloomily as if it had been November. Scudding clouds, from which came gushes of hail, swept over the sky and brushed the tallest points of rock as they passed. The wind came in gusts as chill as the wintry blasts, and before it the vexed ocean swelled and heaved, while its tumbling mass of waters seemed to forbid man to approach, much more to trust the frail workmanship of his hands to its overwhelming power. The night-light still glimmered from

some of the dwellings in Garveloch, the islands of the Sound were not yet visible from the heights, and the peaks of Lorn were but beginning to show themselves against the eastern sky, when Angus came out stealthily from his dwelling, softly closed the door, drew his plaid about him, and paced down to the beach. He was proceeding to get out his boat, when his son Kenneth approached.

"Father," said he, "you are not going to trust yourself at sea to-day?"

"Help must be had, Kenneth. I must cross at the risk of my own life, or more will be lost. I have here the last of my savings; and since money is worth no more than pebbles in Garveloch, I must carry it where it may buy us food."

"And my mother——"

"Your mother is in the inner room, where she has been up with Jamie all night. I heard him very loud just now. His fever runs high, so that she will not miss me perhaps for hours. She neither saw nor heard me come out.—Now, Kenneth, say nothing about going instead of me. You know that my experience of the sea is greater than yours, and the best skill is little enough for such a voyage as mine is like to be."

• "But my mother must soon know," urged Kenneth.

"Surely. Tell her that I hope to be back to-morrow night, with that which may ease her nursing. Farewell, my boy."

Kenneth was a brave, high-spirited youth. His heart was full when he saw his father put off

among the stormy breakers, and he therefore said nothing. He helped to guide the boat to the last moment, wading as deep and struggling with the waves as long as he possibly could, till his father made a commanding sign that he should return. There was no use in speaking amidst the thunder of the waters. Kenneth wrung out his plaid, and climbing the rock, sat down, unheeding the wind, to watch his father's boat, scarcely visible in the grey light, as it won its weary way among the billows. Bitter thoughts rose fast within him;—his father in peril at sea; his mother worn with care and watching; his beloved little Jamie, the youngest of the large family, and their darling, sinking under the fever; all the others changing from what they had been, some in health, some in spirits, some in temper, and he unable to do anything to help them. Dismissed with others from the station because his labour was not now worth the food he consumed, he had come home to be, as he thought, a burden, but as his parents declared, a comfort, to his family amidst their cares, and daily looked round, and ever in vain, for some means of assisting them. As he now thought of the fruitlessness of all his efforts, tears rose and blinded him so that he could no longer discern any object at sea. As fast as he dashed them away they rose again, till he no longer resisted them, but let them flow as they had never flowed since childhood.

As he sat with his face hid in his plaid, he was roused by the pressure of his mother's hand upon

his shoulder. She had spoken from a distance, but the roaring of wind and waters and the screaming of sea-fowl were more powerful than her voice, and her appearance took Kenneth by surprise—a surprise at which she smiled.

“Mother!” he cried, as he started up, and a burning blush overspread his face; “if I were a good son, it would be my part to smile when I found you with sinking spirits.”

Ella smiled again as she answered—

“And when my spirits sink, I will look to you for cheer. Meantime, never fancy that tears are unworthy a brave man, or always a sorrowful sight to a mother. It is God’s will, Kenneth, that there is cause for tears; and since there is cause, it is no pain to me to see them fall. If God calls you and me hither to look out upon a second year’s storms, he knows that it is as natural for the heart as for the cloud to drop its rain; and never think, my boy, that I shall be a harder judge than he.”

“But what brought ye out, mother, so early, into the cold?”

“I came to seek the cooling wind. Jamie fell asleep, and Annie came to take her turn beside him; and finding Angus gone, and my head hot and weary, I thought I should find more rest on the rock than in my bed. I see the boat, Kenneth. I know your father’s purpose, and I guess you were praying just now for his safe return.”

“And, O mother! I had some distrustful thought in the midst of my prayer. If he should

not return, and even while he is gone, I can do nothing. Here I am, eating my daily portion, which I never helped to earn; being a burden when I thought—proud as I was—that I should be your main joy and help. O mother! this humbles one sadly. I never thought to be so humbled.”

“Who that is humbled ever sees the stroke before it comes, Kenneth? Look round, and mark. Where many a smoke rose, only a short year since, from those cottages below, the fires are quenched, and with them is quenched the pride of those who revelled in plenty. Now, many are gone, and have left but four bare walls for us to remember them by. Some are gone to lie cold under yonder gray stones, and some few have found their way back over the sea. Those that remain have lost their pride: it was blown away with the cold ashes of their last fire; and it will not come back while they sit hungry and shivering. Which of these thought any more than you that they should be so humbled? When I gloried in my Jamie, as the brightest and handsomest of my children, I did not expect that he would be the first I should lay in the grave.”

“Must he die, mother?”

“I take such to be God’s will, Kenneth; but I once had a lesson, as you know, against reading his pleasure too readily. They that I thought lost came to dry land, and another lay under the water when I thought him safe on the hard rock. Since that day, I have ever waited for the issue;

and so I will now. We will hope that Jamie may live, and we will be ready to part with any who were but just now in life and strength."

"It is but little we know, indeed," replied Kenneth. "It seems but yesterday that yon sea was almost as busy as a thronged city, with a hundred vessels following the shoals, and then crowding homewards with a full cargo; and now this year and last, not a boat has gone out, not a gleam of sun, not a blink of moonlight has been upon the sea; and as to the land, it is more changed still. Where the barley-fields were as green as a rich pasture three years ago, there are only a few straggling blades, just enough to tempt a man with thoughts of what a harvest is. This is a change we little feared to see."

"And yet," said Ella, "many did foresee, and all might have foreseen. When was there ever a time that the seasons did not change? Here we have been too slow to learn God's will. We knew that the same storms that took away our occupation must cut off our harvest; we knew that such stormy seasons come from time to time; and yet we acted as if we were promised plenty for ever. Our children look up to us for food, because we have given them no warning that it should cease; and they are right. But if we look up to God in the same manner we are wrong; for the warning was given long ago."

"I have heard uncle Ronald speak of it," replied Kenneth. "He has often feared that scarcity would come; but he told me that father,

and widow Cuthbert, and the Duffs, would never be taken by surprise."

"If it had not been for our savings," replied Ella, "we should have had worse things to undergo than may be in store for us. Instead of trembling for Jamie, I might have been mourning the half of my children. Instead of grieving to see you wasting, Kenneth—how thin ye are grown!—I might have been——" She stopped.

"If I am thin, mother," Kenneth replied, "it is with care; and my care is that I can do nothing for bread for myself and you."

"I will take you at your word," replied his mother, with a smile. "We will try whether you will grow stouter for your conscience being at rest. But, mind, it shall be but a moderate trial, and I will share it with you."

Kenneth looked eagerly to his mother for an explanation of what was in her mind. Ella told him that there was positively no more grain to be bought before harvest. Farmer Duff had very wisely kept back enough for seed-corn, in case of the crop failing utterly, and had very reasonably laid up a sufficient store for his own household; and none was now left over. Ella's remaining store was not sufficient to afford even a stinted allowance to the whole family for the three months still to come; and she now, therefore, proposed that neither she nor her son should touch barley or oatmeal, but give up their share to the younger and tenderer members of the family.

Kenneth was grateful to his mother for her

confidence. She had hitherto concealed the fact of the supply being nearly exhausted, in the hope that Kenneth, like the rest, would eat and think little of the future; but she now saw that he would be made happier by being allowed to share her sacrifices, and she therefore called upon him to do so.

Kenneth was not yet satisfied. It was not enough to be permitted to save food; he must find out how to obtain it.

“Not enough!” exclaimed his mother, mournfully. “My boy, ye little know what it is, and ye never can till the trial is made. Ye little know what it is to lie down at night cold and aching, and to toss about unable to sleep, when sleep seems the one thing that would give ye ease, since ye cannot have food. Ye little think what sleep is when it comes,—how horrible fancies are ever rising up to steal away the sweetness of rest—how all that ye see and all that ye touch turns to food, and turns back again before ye can get it to your mouth; or, worse still, to fancy ye are driven by some evil power to strangle and devour whatever is most precious to you. Ye little think what it is to wake with a parched mouth and hands clenched, so that they are like an infant’s all the day after, and the limbs trembling and the sight dim, as if fifty years had come over ye in a night. Ye little know, Kenneth, what it will be to loathe the food you and I shall have, and to see the thoughtless little ones crumbling the bannocks and eating them as if they were to be had as easily as the hailstones

that have beat down the crops. Wait a while, my boy, before you say all this is not enough."

"You know too well, mother, what it is. Can it be that you have been fasting alone already?"

"I learned all this," said Ella, evading the question, "when I was nearly as young as you. There was a scarcity then, and we had a sore struggle. My father was never well after that season. There was no need, thank God, to stint the lads as we stinted ourselves; and, as for me, the only harm," she continued, smiling, "was, that your father found me less comely when he came back than I had been when he went away. There is also this good,—that there is one among us who has gone through evil times, and knows how to abide them."

"Teach me, mother. How shall I get such food as we may live on?"

"There will be no positive want of food yet, my boy, though it will be such as will not nourish us like that we have been used to. We must try shell-fish, without bannocks or potatoes; merely shell-fish, day after day; and the strongest soon grow weak on such diet."

"I would rather give up my share, sometimes," said Kenneth, "than gather them at the cost of what I see. I have been glad you were at home when the tide went down, and I would not let the little ones come and help, lest they should learn to fight like the hungry people on the shore. Dan, that ever kept his eyes half-shut at noon, now watches the first falling of the water,

and bullies every one, if it be Noreen herself, that sees a shell before he snatches it."

"Their potatoes have not come up," observed Ella, "and they begin to be pinched the very first, because they had nothing to give for meal."

"And then," continued Kenneth, "the Murdochs have got the ill-will of all the neighbours, by their stripping every child they meet of whatever he may be carrying home. The very babies are learning to curse Meg Murdoch."

"And so you took their part," said Ella, smiling, "and let them strip you in turn. You are right not to let your little brothers go down with you to learn theft and covetousness; but you must not go on giving away your own share, now that you will have no bread at home."

"Then there are the fowl," said Kenneth. "They are not food for the delicate, to be sure, at this season; but we must try whether they will not nourish us till better days come. The worst of it is that very few are left, and those are the oldest and toughest."

"The neighbours that are poorer than we have been everywhere before us," said Ella. "But they are welcome. Since they trusted to chance, the first chances are their due. My eyes are dim with watching yon boat, and I can see nothing: is it still there, or has the mist come over it?"

Ella had scarcely withdrawn her gaze for a moment from her husband's struggle with the winds and waves. Kenneth, who had not thus

strained his sight, could just discern the speck rising and falling on the dreary waste of waters.

"I see her still winning her way, mother; but you will scarce make her out again."

"I will not try now, but go home."

"And to bed," said Kenneth. "You are weary and half-frozen, standing on this point as if ye came to meet the storm. Promise me you will rest, mother!"

"Perhaps I will if Jamie is still asleep. And do you hasten down, Kenneth, and gather whatever the tide may have thrown up. Now, don't part with all you get for your own share. I have called upon you for self-denial; and part of that self-denial must be not to give all the help you have been accustomed to yield."

"That is the worst part of it," said Kenneth; "but I remember, mother, that my first duty lies at home. O, if there were no hardship, how much less greedy and quarrelsome should we be! It is not in men's nature to quarrel for shell-fish every time the tide goes down."

"Remember," said Ella, "that better things also arise out of hardship. Do none learn patience? Do none practise self-denial?"

"But we have not known extreme hardship, mother."

"True. May the day never come when I shall see my children looking with jealousy upon one another! The jealousy of the starving is a fearful sight."

Kenneth's first trial of his new resolution awaited him when he went down to the shore to

gather shell-fish. His appearance was usually a signal for the children, who were driven away by some one of the tyrants of the neighbourhood, to come down and put themselves under his protection. They had learned to reckon on his share being divided among them ; for, while there was food at home, he could not find in his heart to refuse the little half-starved creatures their piteous requests. One found that some of her pickings were mere empty shells ; another pleaded that she had no breakfast on the mornings when it was her turn to look for fish ; and another declared that his father would beat him if he did not carry home his bonnetful. One or all of these pleas usually emptied Kenneth's store. One set of claimants had never yet been refused,—his cousins. Fergus's two eldest boys, who had earned good wages, and hoped to earn them again when the fishery should be resumed, were thrown back on their own resources in the interval. It was melancholy to see them wandering about the island in search of anything that might be rendered eatable, and at times reduced to beg of their cousin Kenneth as many shell-fish as he could spare. Kenneth felt that nothing but absolute famine could drive him to deny them ; and he was therefore glad to perceive that they were not on the shore this morning. He gave notice to the little ones, who now gathered about him, that he could henceforth only help them by defending their right to whatever they could pick up. He must share equally with them from this day, and he hoped they would not ask that which

he could no longer give. And now began the scenes which he was henceforth daily to witness among the children, and in time, upon a larger scale, among the parents. All the petty arts, all the violence, all the recklessness, to which the needy are tempted, began to show themselves first among those whose habits of self-control were weakest; and afforded a specimen of what might be looked for when the parents should be driven by want beyond the restraint of principles and habits which had been powerful in the absence of overwhelming temptation.

One of the little boys uplifted a vehement cry. "Willie has snatched my bonnet! O, my bonnet, my bonnet! It was fuller to-day than it has ever been yet."

"That is the very reason," cried Willie, a stout lad, who felt that he could carry everything among the little ones by strength of arm. "You never had enough before to make it worth while taking them. Now I have got them, I will keep them."

Kenneth, who was the representative of justice, struggled with Willie, and got back the property; but the lad vowed vengeance for his drubbing, especially against the complainant, who henceforth had no peace. All parties being left discontented, it was plainly a great evil that there had been temptation to recur to what Willie called the right of the strongest.

One of the little girls was found hidden behind a rock, eating all that had been collected for the family at home. Many cried "Shame!"

and vowed she should never again be trusted within reach of more than her own share; to which she answered, that she should eat, when she was hungry, and that those who had enough might supply her brothers and sisters. This child would have had a rate levied upon all the more provident, for the relief of her fellow-paupers.

Two lads having quarrelled about the share due to one, the most hungry threw the whole back into the sea, by way of revenge as he declared. One would have thought he had heard Mr. Mackenzie speak of the possible, though extreme, case of men burning stacks because there was not enough corn.

Even this reckless boy was less provoking than one party, pre-eminent in poverty and dirt, who could not be persuaded to give over their sport, happen what might. They called together whatever animals could eat shell-fish, and put this food down the mouths of dogs and ponys,—both of which eat fish in the islands.

“How can you,” said Kenneth, “bring more eaters down to the shore when we have too many already?”

“We must have our play,” answered they. “Ours is the age for play, as we have heard our father say; and we are so cold and hungry almost all day, that it is very hard if we may not amuse ourselves when we can.”

There was no use in pointing out to them that they were doing all they could to increase their own hunger; they only answered that they would

have their sport as long as they could get it, and immediately whistled for more dogs.

To judge by their acts, these children did not perceive that, though they could not determine the quantity of fish which should be within reach, it was their fault that the number of eaters was heedlessly increased. The half-starved multitudes of an over-peopled kingdom might take a lesson from their folly.

"Can this be the place," thought Kenneth, "can these be the children, where and among whom there was so much cheerfulness but a few seasons ago? How happy we all used to be picking up our fish! And now, some still laugh louder than ever; but the mirth of the destitute is more painful to witness than the grave looks of those who have something left. O, for peace and plenty once more!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TEACHABLE.

As Ella slowly took her way homewards, she caught a glimpse of two men coming up the winding path she was descending. Forgetting the impossibility that Angus should be already returned, and seeing that one was Fergus, she supposed that her husband and brother were coming to meet her. On her turning a point,

they were in full view. It was Ronald instead of Angus. Terror seized the anxious wife, who was weakened by watching and care.

“ O Angus, Angus !” she cried, in tones which made the rocks ring again. “ O, he is lost, and ye are come to tell me !”

Before her brothers could reach her, she had sunk down, unable to keep her hold of the rock, while the earth seemed to swim round and quake beneath her. She was lost in a fainting-fit before a word of comfort could reach her ear.

“ This must be fasting as well as care,” said Ronald, as he chafed her hands, while Fergus sprinkled water over her face. “ Never before was Ella seen to sink, much less upon a false alarm. It must be sore suffering that could bring her to this.”

Fergus’s tears were falling fast while he replied,—

“ ’Tis the parent’s heart that suffers, Ronald. ’Tis for her little Jamie that she has watched and struggled till she faints, spirit and body together.”

“ She is coming round,” said Ronald. “ There is colour in her lips. Now see if her spirit does not rally as soon as her limbs, or sooner. She will be more surprised at herself than we are.”

“ Hush ! she opened her eyes just now. Raise her a little more.”

“ Why, Ella,” said Ronald, smiling, as he leaned over her, “ ye never gave me such a greeting before. Why are ye so sorry to see me to-day ?”

‘Is nothing the matter?’ asked Ella steadily “I dreamed there was;—something about Angus.”

“It was only a dream, as far as I know. I have but just landed, and I came to you for news of Angus and all of you.”

By this time Ella had started up, and refusing further assistance, supported herself by leaning against the rock.

“I thought Fergus looked sad, I thought he looked wretched,” she continued, gazing wistfully into her younger brother’s face.

“May be ye’re right, Ella; but it was not for you. A man has enough to make him look grave in times like these. But I did not mean to frighten you.”

“Times like these make us all selfish,” said Ella, “and that is the worst of them. There was a time, Fergus, when I should have been quicker-sighted to your sorrow than my own.—But come with me to shelter before yon cloud bursts. I have been too long from my sick child already. Come with me both of ye, and take the poor welcome I can give. O, it is a comfort, Ronald, to see ye here!”

Her step was little less firm, as her brothers observed, than their own. At her own door she charged them to make no one uneasy by speaking of her fainting-fit. It was a strange fancy, she said, which would not come over her again.

“Mother, how white you look!” exclaimed Annie, as they entered.

"I am cold, my lass. The wind is piercing on the heights; so put some more peat to the fire, and see how you can make your uncles comfortable while I go to Jamie."

Jamie was still in his uneasy sleep. He lay on his back, his mouth open and parched, as if not a drop of liquid had ever touched his tongue, his breathing irregular, his bony fingers sometimes twitching, sometimes drooped with an appearance of utter helplessness. While his mother passed her hand over his temples, and watched his pulse and his countenance, she did not perceive that any one had followed her into the chamber. Presently she heard stifled sobs, and saw that Fergus was kneeling at the foot of the child's crib, hiding his face in his plaid.

"God help you! God comfort you!" she heard him say.

"You think he will die, Fergus; and you tremble for your own two sick children. But hope—at least till you see them as ill as Jamie. I have hoped till now."

Fergus's grief became more violent. His two infants had died in the night. The fever had made quicker work where its victims were already weakened by want. Fergus came to bid his brothers to the funeral.

Ella led him out of the chamber, and placed herself by him, but so that she could see all that passed by her child's bedside. She was more than ever thankful that Ronald had come, when he succeeded in gaining Fergus's attention to

what he had to say on the present state of affairs.

He could give little comfort about the prospect of an early supply of grain from the neighbouring islands, as there was a nearly equal degree of distress throughout. The season that was unfavourable to one, was so to all; and the same causes which stopped the fishery laid waste the land. But though immediate relief was not to be looked for, it was hoped that help was on the way. Memorials to government had been sent from the different stations, and Captain Forbes was now making a circuit of the islands in order to estimate the degrees of distress, and to judge how best to apply the funds the Company proposed to set apart for the relief of the inhabitants. He would soon be in Garveloch, and presently after it was possible a vessel might arrive with pease, potatoes, or grain. Ronald had no sooner heard of this prospect of relief than he made his way over the stormy sea to cheer his sister and brother with the news. There was doubtless another, Ella observed, whom he would wish to tell, though she was thankful to say that widow Cuthbert suffered less from the pressure of the times than any family in Garveloch, unless it was the Duffs.

Ronald took no notice of this at present; he reserved what he had to say about Katie till Fergus should be gone; and proceeded to explain that he had endeavoured in vain to make a purchase of meal that he might bring with him.

There was none to be had for love or money. But as those who could pay best were served first, he had received a promise that he should purchase a portion of the first cargo that passed the station. He desired that it might be equally divided between the families of his sister, his brother, and the widow Cuthbert, and that some one should be on the watch to secure the package addressed to Fergus, as soon as the sloop should approach. Before he even thanked his brother, Fergus anxiously inquired when the supply would come? There was no knowing. It might be a fortnight; it might be two months. He did feel and express himself grateful, however, and said something, to which Ronald would not listen, about repaying, in happier days, that part of the debt which could be repaid, and then rose to go and tell his wife that food was or would be on the way. Ronald called him back as he was going out at the door, to entreat that he would never revive the subject of payment.

"I have only myself to work and care for," he said, "and whatever is left over is the natural portion of my kindred. You would inherit it at my death, you know, Fergus; and it is only putting it into your hands when you really want it, instead of waiting till it might be less acceptable to you and yours."

Upon this ensued, as soon as Ronald and his sister were quite alone, a conversation relating to the widow Cuthbert. It was long and earnest, and interrupted only by the attentions necessary

to the little patient. The child, on waking, knew his uncle Ronald, and submitted to be soothed and quieted by him while Ella sat spinning beside the crib.

They were thus engaged in the afternoon when Katie entered. She brought a nourishing mess for little Jamie, as she had done more than once before since his illness began. She was surprised to see Ronald, for visitors were rare in such a season of storms. She declared herself vexed at having entered without warning, when she saw him preparing for immediate departure; but he said he must be at the station before night, and had remained too long already; and as his sister did not press his stay, Katie said no more about it, but took his offered hand, and cheerfully confirmed what Ella had told him of the health and comfort of her family. There was no need to ask after her own, for she looked, perhaps from the force of contrast with everybody else, more fresh in health and easy in spirit than in many former days when less care prevailed.

"Go, my dears," said Ella to the children in the outer room, "and help your uncle with his boat, and then ye can watch him away round the point; and mind ye mark whether any other vessel is in sight. And yet Angus said he should not be back this day."

"And now," said Katie, when she had done watching how her friend coaxed little Jamie into swallowing the food she brought, "you must let

me have my own way entirely, Ella; for you know me for a wilful woman."

"Let me hear your will before I promise, Katie."

"My will is to change house and family with you to-night. You must put my children to bed for me, and eat my supper, which you will find in the cupboard, and then lie down in my bed, and sleep till the sun is high. You can trust me to nurse Jamie, I know, from what you said when my Hugh struggled through the measles; and you may quite depend on it, Kenneth says, that your husband will not return to-night."

Ella had no foolish scruples about accepting this neighbourly offer. She had watched many nights, and was so nearly exhausted, that this was a very seasonable help, she thought, to the better performance of her duties the next day. She had been ever ready to give similar assistance to her neighbours in like cases; and knowing the pleasure of doing friendly acts, she would not refuse it to Katie. She therefore agreed at once, adding,—

"I am sure you would not offer this if you had any fear of your children taking the fever from me or you."

"Certainly not, Ella. You know nobody was more careful than I when the small-pox was in the island; and I offended several neighbours by not letting my children so much as speak with theirs; but this kind of fever is not given and taken, as I have good reason to be sure."

In a little while, seeing that Ella was moving about as if to prepare for her comfort during the evening and night, she called her to come and sit down, and not trouble herself with any more cares this day.

“That which will do for you,” she said, “will do for me; and if I want anything, there will be Annie to tell me where to find it.”

“I’m willing enough to sit down with ye,” said Ella, when she had fed the fire, and resumed her spinning, “because——”

“Because you cannot stand; is not that it, Ella? You still look as white as if you had seen a ghost. So you took Ronald for a ghost this morning?”

“Fergus should not have told you that silly story. No; I am willing to be alone with you, because I have much to say about Ronald. You need never more look as you do now, Katie. I am going to lay a different plea before you this day; and if ye will grant it, it will be my last.”

Katie bent over her work, and made no reply; so Ella proceeded.

“You know as well as I how long Ronald has loved you, and how sore a struggle your marriage was to him, and that there have been times since when he has hoped; but you have never known, as I have, how tossed in mind he has been for more than three years past. He has come and gone, and come again, Katie, watching your feelings, and waiting for what he thought your pleasure, till he often lost all power

of judging what he should do, and how he should speak to you."

"I am sure," said Katie, "it was as far from my wish as from my knowledge that his mind should be so tossed. I never willingly left any one in uncertainty, and I have far too much respect for Ronald, far too much——"

"Neither he nor I ever had such a thought, Katie, as that ye would trifle with him or any man. If he had, ye would soon have seen an end of his love. The uncertainty was no fault of yours, and it was only from particular causes that it lasted so long. He has said many a time that if you had been a young girl, he would have spoken out and known your mind at once; but your husband was his friend, and there was no measuring what your feelings might be now, and he feared above all things wounding them; and so he lingered and lingered and never spoke, till circumstances have decided the matter he could not decide for himself. He wishes you to know, Katie, that you may lay aside all fear of him. He gives you his word of honour he will never sue you; and if, as he suspects, he has occasioned you uneasiness, he entreats your pardon, and hopes you will dismiss it all from your mind."

"Is this the plea you spoke of?" asked Katie.

"No; the plea I spoke of may be, perhaps, more easily granted. Let me entreat for him that you will regard him freely as an old friend, as a brother. He will think no more of mar-

riage; and I know nothing would make him so happy as being able to watch over and help us all equally. Your children love him, Katie; and if you will only do as I do, give him a welcome when he comes and a blessing when he departs, and ask him for aid, and take what he offers, and let him keep watch upon your children for their good, there may be an end of all difficulty, and my brother may be happier than he has been for many a year. It will ever be painful to be like strangers or common acquaintance; and you have his word of honour,—and whose word is so sure?—that he will not seek to be more than friend; the only way for his peace and your ease is to be really friends,—as if ye were both the children of the same parents. Let Ronald be your friend as he is mine.”

“I am not aware,” said Katie, “of either act or word which need make me scruple to give and take friendship in the way you wish. But, Ella, you must answer me one question plainly; is it anything in myself which made Ronald change his views? I should not have asked this if you had not said that he gave up marriage altogether; but since I know that his thoughts are not turning upon any one else, I should like to be told whether he has less esteem for me than before I married?”

“If he had, would he seek your friendship as he does? If he esteemed or thought he ever should esteem you less, he would just keep away from Garveloch, and tell nobody why, unless

perhaps myself. No; he feels as he ever did; and lest you should doubt me, I will tell you all I know of his conscience and his judgment on this matter. It is the state of society in the islands, Katie, that makes him and other thoughtful men give up the intention of marrying."

"And some that are not thoughtful too, Ella. I could tell you of more than one that would fain have had me when there was prospect that my boys would be a little fortune to me,—I mean when labour was scarce,—that have now slunk away, and will never hold out a hand to me again, I dare say, till my family promise to be a profit instead of a burden."

"You do not take Ronald to be one of these!" cried Ella indignantly. "You cannot think that he is one to come forward and go back as your fortune waxes and wanes, whether that fortune be your children or your savings! It is not for himself only, but for you and your children, and for us and for society, that he thinks and acts as he does."

Katie did not doubt it.—Ronald was far from selfish.

"If all was bright with us again in a single month," said Ella, "he would keep in the same mind; for he sees that prosperity can never last long among us, while we make no provision against the changes that must ever befall, while seasons are sometimes stormy and our commerce liable to variations. We have made an abundant season and a brisk demand into curses, by acting

as if they were always to last; and now we want many such as he to soften our miseries, which he could not do if he were burdened like us."

"But it is hard," observed Katie, "that he must deny himself because his neighbours are imprudent."

"Yet his lot is best, Katie. It is sweet to him to help us in our need; and he is spared the sorrow of seeing his little ones pine for that which he cannot give. Yet he cannot but feel that he bears more than his share in giving up marriage altogether. If there were no O'Rorys to marry at eighteen, and if most others had the prudence to wait some years longer than they do, all who wish might marry and deserve no blame."

"But who thinks of praise or blame about the act of marrying?" said Katie. "I own that they ought. When one looks round and sees how sin and sorrow grow where hunger prevails, one cannot think any man guiltless who overlooks the chance of his increasing the poverty of society. But how few consider this! Those who think themselves conscientious, go no farther than to consider whether they are marrying the right person. They spend no thought on the time and the manner, or on their duty to society."

"It is so even here," said Ella, "where we can trace the causes of distress: and in great cities, where it is easy to lay the blame in the wrong place, and where the people become the more reckless the poorer they grow, the evil is

much greater. There children are born whose youthful parents have neither roofs to shelter, nor clothes to cover them; and the more widely poverty spreads through the multitude of labourers, the faster is that multitude doubled. You have seen enough of cities, Katie, to know that this is true."

"Yes; and all this is done in the name of Providence. I always expected next to hear Providence blamed for not giving food enough for all this multitude."

"Such blame would have been as reasonable as the excuse," said Ella. "But how slow we are to learn the will of Providence in this case, when it is the very same that we understand in other cases! Providence gave us strength of limbs and of passions: yet these we restrain for the sake of living in society. If a man used his hands to pull down his neighbour's house, or his passion of anger to disturb the society in which he lives, we should think it no excuse that Providence had given him his natural powers, or made him enjoy their exercise. How is it more excusable for a man to bring children into the world, when there are so many to be fed that every one that is born must help to starve one already living?"

"Since Providence has not made food increase as men increase," said Katie, "it is plain that Providence wills restraint here as in the case of other passions."

"And awful are the tokens of its pleasure, Katie. The tears of mothers over their dead

children, that shrunk under poverty like blossoms withering before the frosts, the fading of the weak, the wasting of the strong, thefts in the streets, sickness in the houses, funerals by the wayside—these are the tokens that unlimited increase is not God's will."

"These tell us where we are wrong, Ella. How shall we learn how we may be right?"

"By doing as you have done through life, Katie; by using our judgment, and such power as we have. We have not the power of increasing food as fast as our numbers may increase; but we have the power of limiting our numbers to agree with the supply of food. This is the gentle check which is put into our own hands; and if we will not use it, we must not repine if harsher checks follow. If the passionate man will not restrain his anger, he must expect punishment at the hands of him whom he has injured; and if he imprudently indulges his love, he must not complain when poverty, disease, and death lay waste his family."

"Do not you think, Ella, that there are more parties to a marriage than is commonly supposed?"

"There is a party," replied Ella, smiling, "that if it could be present, would often forbid the banns; and it is this party that Ronald has now consulted."

"You mean society."

"Yes. In savage life, marriage may be a contract between a man and woman only, for their mutual pleasure; but if they lay claim to

the protection and advantages of society, they are responsible to society. They have no right to provide for a diminution of its resources; and therefore, when they marry, they form a tacit contract with society to bring no members into it who shall not be provided for, by their own labour or that of their parents. No man is a good citizen who runs the risk of throwing the maintenance of his children on others."

"Ah, Ella! did you consider this before your ten children were born?"

"Indeed, Katie, there seemed no doubt to my husband and me that our children would be well provided for. There were then few labourers in Garveloch, and a prospect of abundant provision; and even now we are not in poverty. We have money, clothes, and furniture; and that we have not food enough is owing to those who, having saved nothing, are now far more distressed than we are. Let us hope that all will take warning. My husband and I shall be careful to teach those of our children who are spared to us how much easier it is to prevent want than to endure it."

"You and I will do what we can, Ella, to make our children prudent in marriage; and if all our neighbours would do the same, we might look forward cheerfully. But so few take warning! And it is so discouraging to the prudent to find themselves left almost alone!"

"Nay, Katie; it is not as if all must work together to do any good. Every prudent man, like Ronald, not only prevents a large increase

of mischief, but, by increasing capital, does a positive good. Every such act of restraint tells; every such wise resolution stops one drain on the resources of society. Surely this knowledge affords grounds for a conscientious man to act upon, without doubt and discouragement."

"How differently is honour imputed in different times!" said Katie, smiling. "The times have been when they who had brought the most children into the world were thought the greatest benefactors of society; and now we are honouring those most who have none. Yet both may have been right in their time."

"A change of place serves the same purpose as change of time," replied Ella. "If Ronald were in a new colony, where labour was more in request than anything else, he would be honoured for having ten children, and doubly honoured for having twenty. And reasonably too; for, in such a case, children would be a gift, and not a burden to society."

"It is a pity, Ella, that all should not go there who are too poor to marry properly, and have no relish for the honour of a single life. Dan and his wife would be a treasure to a new colony."

"If they and their children would work, Katie; not otherwise. But the poor little things would have a better chance of life there. If Noreen stays here, she may be too like many a Highland mother;—she may tell of her twenty children, and leave but one or two behind her."

"My heart aches for those poor infants," said

Katie. "One would almost as soon hear that they were put out of the way at their birth, as see them dwindle away and drop into their little graves one after another, before they are four years old. I have often heard that neither the very rich nor the very poor leave such large families behind them as the middling classes; and if the reason is known, it seems to me very like murder not to prevent it."

"The reasons are well known, Katie. Those who live in luxury and dissipation have fewer children born to them than any class; but those that are born are guarded from the wants and diseases which cut off the families of the very poor. The middling classes are more prudent than the lowest, and have therefore fewer children than they, though more than the luxurious; and they rear a much larger proportion than either."

"One might look far, Ella, among the lords and ladies in London, or among the poor Paisley weavers, before one would find such a healthy, hearty tribe——"

"As yours," Katie would have said; but seeing Ella look upon her little Jamie with a deep sigh, she stopped short, but presently went on——

"It seems to me that a lady of fashion, who gives up her natural rest for feasting and playing cards all night long in a hot room, and lets herself be driven about in a close carriage instead of taking the air on her own limbs, can have no more wish to rear a large healthy family than

Noreen, who lets her babe dangle as if she meant to break its back, and gives the poor thing nothing but potatoes, when it ought to be nourished with the best of milk and wholesome bread. Both are little better than the mothers in China. O Ella! did your husband ever tell you of the children in China?"

"Yes, but I scarcely believed even his word for it. Who told you?"

"I have read it in more books than one; and I know that the same thing is done in India; so I am afraid it is all too true. In India it is a very common thing for female children to be destroyed as soon as born."

"The temptation is strong, Katie, where the people are so poor that many hundred thousand at a time die of famine. But child murder is yet more common in China, where no punishment follows, and nothing can exceed the distress for food. In great cities, new-born babes are nightly laid in the streets to perish, and many more are thrown into the river, and carried away before their parents' eyes."

"It is even said, Ella that there are persons whose regular business it is to drown infants like puppies."

"O horrible! And how far must people be corrupted before they would bear children to meet such a fate!"

"There is nothing so corrupting as poverty, Ella; and there is no poverty like that of the Chinese."

"And yet China is called the richest country in the world."

“ And so it may be. It may produce more food in proportion to its bounds—it may contain more wealth of every sort than any country in the world, and may at the same time contain more paupers. We call newly-settled countries poor countries because they contain comparatively little capital; but the happiness of the people does not depend on the total amount of wealth, but on its proportion to those who are to enjoy it. What country was ever poorer than Garveloch twenty years ago? Yet nobody was in want. What country is so rich as China at this day? Yet there multitudes eat putrid dogs and cats, and live in boats for want of a house, and follow the English ships, to pick up and devour the most disgusting garbage that they throw overboard.”

“ Suppose such should be the lot of our native kingdom,” said Ella, shuddering. “ Such is the natural course of things when a nation multiplies its numbers without a corresponding increase of food. May it be given to all to see this before we reach the pass of the Chinese!—and even if we never reach it—if, as is more likely, the evil is palliated by the caution of the prudent, by the emigration of the enterprising, and by other means which may yet remain, may we learn to use them before we are driven to it by famine and disease!”

“ It is fearful enough, Ella, to witness what is daily before our eyes. God forbid that the whole kingdom should be in the state that Garveloch is in now!”

“ In very many towns, Katie, there is always distress as great as our neighbours' now ; and so there will be till they that hold the power in their own hands—not the king, not the parliament, not the rich only, but the body of the people, understand those natural laws by which and under which they subsist.”

Many would be of Ella's opinion, if they could, like her, see the operation of the principle of increase within narrow bounds ; for nothing can be plainer, nothing more indisputable when fully understood. In large societies, the mind of the observer is perplexed by the movements around him. The comings and goings, the births, deaths, and accidents, defy his calculations ; and there are always persons at hand who help to delude him by talking in a strain which would have suited the olden time, but which is very inappropriate to the present state of things. In every city, however crowded with a half-starved population, there are many more who do their utmost to encourage population than can give a sound reason for their doing so ; and while their advice is ringing in the ears, and their example is before the eyes, and there is no lack of inaccurate explanations why our workhouses are overflowing, our hospitals thronged, and our funeral bells for ever tolling, it is difficult to ascertain the real state of the case. But when the observation is exercised within a narrow range, the truth becomes immediately apparent,—it becomes evident that since capital increases in a slower ratio than population, there

will be sooner or later a deficiency of food, unless the more vigorous principle of increase be controlled. If the welfare of a nation depended on the hare not reaching the goal before the tortoise, there might be some who would insist till the last moment that they moved at an equal pace, and ought, therefore, to be let alone; but there would be some who, trusting to their own eyes, would take precautionary measures: they might let the hare run till she overtook the tortoise, but then they would put on a clog. If any complain that this is not a fair race, the answer is that the hare and the tortoise were not made to vie with each other in speed; and if we set them to do it, we must manage the competition with a view to the consequences.

Ella and Katie, sensible and unprejudiced, and rendered quick-sighted by anxiety for their children, were peculiarly qualified for seeing the truth when fairly placed before them. Their interest in Ronald, as well as in their own offspring, gave them a view of both sides of the question; and there remained not a doubt, after calculating numbers and resources, that there must be some check to the increase of the people, and that the prudential check is infinitely preferable to those of vice and misery.

Of the griefs attending the latter, Ella could form some idea—though her feelings were not embittered by self-reproach—when she looked in the face of her sick child, who was now resting his aching head on her bosom. She could not leave him, though it was growing late, till

he closed his heavy eyes, and let her lay him on his pillow. Then Annie came to bear the widow company for an hour or two; and Ella went to pass the night in her friend's dwelling.

"We shall never have any reserves in our confidence henceforth, Ella," said Katie, smiling. "There has been but one subject on which I was not always glad to hear you speak; and now that one is settled for ever."

Ella was glad that Katie had thus spoken, for she had not been perfectly sure of her friend's state of feeling. She now gazed affectionately on that youthful face, touched but not withered by early sorrow, and kissed the forehead of the friend she loved like a younger sister, and whom she could not have regarded as such more tenderly if they had been made sisters by marriage.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE UNTEACHABLE

ANGUS was restored safe to his home; but his return was melancholy enough. He was blown over the Sound by a storm, and landed at the moment that the funeral train who bore the bodies of Fergus's two children were winding up the rocks to the burial-place. The anxious father was naturally possessed with the idea that this

was the funeral of the child he had left so ill; and he was confirmed in the supposition by seeing none of his family on the beach to await his arrival. Kenneth and his brothers were among the mourners, and Angus therefore found his wife and the girls alone when, with a throbbing heart, he entered his own dwelling. Ella met him with a calm but sad countenance, which, together with the silent awe with which the children looked up to him, answered but too plainly the question he would have asked. Little Jamie had died a few hours before in his mother's arms. The last words he spoke had been to call for his father.

"O, why was I not here?" exclaimed the mourning parent, laying his cheek to that of his boy, as if the cold body could be conscious of the caress. "It must have been an evil spirit that decoyed me away."

"Alas, then, your voyage has been in vain!" said Ella. "You have brought no bread."

Angus shook his head mournfully, and cast down the pouch of useless money that came back as full as it went out. The scarcity extended through all the neighbourhood, and no food was to be bought at any price. Ella saw her husband's look of despondency, and rallied. She reminded him that they had a stock of meal, though a scanty one, and she held out the hope, suggested by Ronald's information, that a sloop would soon arrive with food enough to afford a temporary supply to all the inhabitants.

It had been agreed between Fergus and his

sister that a constant watch for this vessel should be kept from daybreak till dark by the elder children of each family. Annie was now at the post in the absence of Kenneth, and Ella tempted her husband out with her, to pronounce whether the look-out was well chosen. She saw that his grief was too new to allow him to receive the condolence of neighbours who might step in on their return from the funeral. She was glad she had done so when she saw Annie putting back the hair which the stormy wind blew over her face, and evidently straining her sight to discern some object at sea. Angus had his glass with him, and in the intervals of the driving mists, he plainly perceived a sloop coming up from the south.

"Away with you, with me for your helper!" cried Ella. "We will be at sea before any one knows what is coming; and then we shall escape contention, and the sight of contention. And you, Annie, tell none but your uncle and Kenneth where we are gone. If it should not be the right sloop, it would be cruel to raise false hopes."

"Besides, mother, the people would tear ye to pieces, or at least the boat—they are grown so savage."

"They would very likely fancy we were going to snatch their share, instead of to receive a regular purchase. Farewell, my lass," she continued, as they reached the boat; "Kenneth will soon be with you, and ye may give us a smile when we land, if yon be the vessel we take her for."

“ But, O father, the squalls are so rough ! I fear to let you go.”

“ Never fear, Annie. The Flora knows the greeting of a summer squall. She will win her way out hardly enough ; but you will see her bounding back as if she was racing with the gale.”

There were many loungers on the beach when Angus and Ella cleared out. Some were invalids, who could not be kept within their cheerless homes even by the chill and boisterous weather. Many were idlers ; and all made sport of what they thought the useless toil of going to sea at such a time. Their jokes would have been painful and perhaps irritating to Angus if he had not had reason to hope that relief was on the way to himself and them.

“ Did ye bring home such a cargo this morning that ye are tempted to try your luck again ?” cried one.

“ Make haste !” exclaimed another, “ or ye’ll scarcely find the shoal. It’s a brave summer day for casting a net.”

“ Or for angling,” observed a third. “ Where are your lines, neighbour ? Nothing like a smooth sea for ladies’ fishing.”

“ Ye must treat us each with a supper when you come back, Angus,” said a fourth, “ unless indeēd the fishes should make a supper of you.”

“ I trust there may be a supper for every one in Garveloch this night,” observed Ella, as the final shout reached the rolling and pitching vessel ; and these cheering words were the last she

she spoke, as all her husband's attention and her own was required to direct their rough and somewhat perilous course.

Never was such a commotion excited in Garveloch as upon the spread of the tidings that a vessel had arrived at the quay with a certain quantity of grain and an ample supply of pease. The eagle was startled from her nest by the uproar. The more shrill grew the blast, the louder rose the voices; the higher swelled the tide over the bar, the greater was the eagerness to cross it as the shortest way to the quay. The men sent their wives home for whatever little wealth they had to offer in exchange, in case the food was to be purchased and not given, while they themselves hastened to secure the point whence they might best bid or entreat. Here a poor invalid, putting forth his utmost power to keep up with his competitors, was jostled aside or thrown down by the passers by. There a band of children were beginning a noisy rejoicing for they scarcely knew what; some among them half-crying in the midst of their shouting from hunger and pain, which would not be forgotten. The only quiet people in the island were Angus's family, and their ill-thriving neighbours round the point.

When the *Flora*, dimly seen in the twilight, came bounding in as her master had foretold, no one awaited her on the beach but those who had watched the whole expedition, Fergus, Kenneth, and his sister. The expected supply of meal was safe, and Fergus lost no time in

conveying it out of sight, and into a place of safety.

"I brought down the money, father," said Kenneth, producing the pouch, "that you might buy more at the quay, if you wish it, before it is all gone."

"No, my boy," said Angus. "We have enough for the present, and I will neither take what others want more than we, nor raise the price by increasing the demand."

The Murdochs and O'Rorys were the last to know what had happened, as little was heard of the tumult beyond the point. They were extremely and almost equally wretched, and were far from attempting to soften their distresses by sympathy and neighbourly offices. Those who are most heedless of adversity in prospect, do not usually bear it best when it comes; and so it proved in the instance of both these families. Murdoch, who, when he might have been prosperous, was too lazy to do more than trust he should get through well enough, now cast all the blame of his destitution on Dan's assurances that it would be the easiest thing in life to live, if he would only grow potatoes. Dan, who was content any way when causes of discontent were only in prospect, forgot there was such a thing as content when the natural consequences of his recklessness came upon him. It had been a terrible day when the absolute want of food had driven both to dig up their seed potatoes. Murdoch had foresight enough to be appalled at the prospect of the long destitution which this mea-

sure must cause. Dan laughed at him for supposing that anything better could be done in a season so wet that every root would rot in the ground instead of growing; but he did not the less grumble at "the powers" for giving him nothing better to eat than half-rotten roots, that afforded no more strength than his own puny infant had and was losing day by day. Noreen often looked rueful with two black eyes, and did not insist so vehemently as formerly on her Dan being "the beautifullest husband in nature;" and as for the child, its best friends could only hope it would follow Noreen's former dangling "babbies," and be laid in peace under the sod.

The first news these neighbours had of the arrival of the vessel from the station was from Kenneth, who goodnaturedly remembered to run and give them the information in time to afford them a fair chance in the scramble. Murdoch seized his staff and was off in an instant.

"Stay, neighbour," cried Kenneth, who was not aware of the extent of Murdoch's poverty; "the buyers have the first chance you know. Better not go empty-handed."

Murdoch thought he was jeering, and shook his stick at him with a gesture of passion, which Kenneth could not resent when he saw how the old man's limbs shook, and how vain were his attempts at unusual speed.

Dan jumped up at the news, snatched his baby, and gave it a toss which was enough to shake its weak frame to pieces, seized upon Noreen for a kiss in answer to the shriek with

which she received the child, snatched the pot in which the last batch of rotten potatoes was boiling, and threw out its contents into the puddle beside the door, and ran off, laughing at his wife's lamentations for the only bit of food she had had to put between her teeth this day. Kenneth now perceived that Dan could bestir himself upon occasion ; and indeed the Irishman's glee was so obstreperous, that it might have been supposed his mirth was owing to his favourite " sperits," if it had not been known that he had been long without the means of procuring himself that indulgence.

Such a man's mirth is easily turned to rage. On reaching the sloop, which was fast emptying of its contents, Dan found that he stood a worse chance of a supply than anybody in Garveloch, except Murdoch, who still lagged behind. To come empty-handed and to come late was a double disqualification ; and to be kept at a distance by force put Dan into a passion which was only equalled by his neighbour's, when he also arrived at the scene of action. It was the policy of the bystanders to turn their rage upon each other. As soon as an opening appeared among the group on the quay, through which the sloop might be approached, they pushed the old man forward, and held Dan back, urging that a hearty youth like him, and a stranger, would not surely force his way before an old man, who had been born and bred in the place ; but Dan kicked, struggled, dealt his blows right and left, and at last sprang upon Murdoch, snatched off

his bonnet, and buffeted him about the face with it.

"You graceless wretch!" exclaimed all who were at leisure to look on.

"Let him uncover gray hairs that helped to make them gray," said Murdoch, in a voice of forced calmness. "It was he that lured me to poverty, and now let him glory in it."

"It's owing to your gray hairs I did not beat you blind this minute," cried Dan. "I'd have you keep a civil tongue in your head, if you'd have your eyes stay there too."

"I would peril my eyes to say it again," cried the old man. "It was you that lured me to poverty with saying that Ireland was the brightest and merriest land under the sun, and the only country where a man may live and be content without trouble."

"By the holy poker, so it is, barring such reprobates as you are in it."

"You told me that I spent my labour for nothing, and worse than nothing, when I grew oats and barley. You told me that I might get three times as much food out of the ground, by growing potatoes instead. You——"

"All true, by the saints, villain as you are to doubt my word! There's three times the victuals in an Irishman's field, and three times the childer in his cabin, and three times the people on the face of the blessed land, that there is where the folks are so mighty high that they must have bread."

“ And three times the number die,” said a voice near, “ when a bad season comes.”

“ And what if they do ?” cried Dan: “ ’tis a blessed land for all that, with a golden sun to live under, and a green turf to lie under.”

“ It’s a vile country,” cried Murdoch, emboldened by hope of support from the bystanders. “ Your children are as hungry as cannibals, and as naked as savages. When the sun shines, you thank the powers and lie still in your laziness——”

“ There’s reason for that,” interrupted Dan. “ There are so many to do the work, we can’t settle who is to begin ; and so we’re content to take no trouble ; and this is the most your Rob and Meg have learned of me.”

“ And then when there comes a blank harvest, you fight over one another’s graves.”

“ Sure the powers forgive the sin,” cried Dan. “ Craving stomachs drive to blows, and then the priest is merciful.”

“ More merciful than you are to one another when the fever comes, cruel savages as you are ! If your own mother took the fever, you would turn her into a shed by the road side, and let her tend herself. You would go quietly smoking your pipe past the very place where your own father lay dying, and never speak a word or move a finger for him.”

“ ’Tis false as to not speaking a word. We pray for them in the fever day and night ; and many’s the mass I have vowed against I grow

richer. The fever is a judgment of Heaven, and where is the good of catching it if we can help it? They that sent it will take care of them that have it, and what is our care to theirs?"

"Shame! shame!" was the cry from all sides; and some who were on their way home with a pan full of meal or a basket full of pease, stopped to listen why.

"Shame! shame!" cried Dan, mimicking the shouters. "You just don't know what you're talking about; for them that have the fever don't cry shame."

"Not in their hearts?"

"Never a bit;—and don't I know that had an uncle in the fever twice, and moved him for fear we should fall down in it too? Didn't he come crawling out the first time when we were bringing a coffin and supposing him dead, and did not he help the wail for himself before we saw him among us? and would he have wailed in a joke, if he had cried 'Shame!' in his heart? and who such a judge as himself?"

"What happened the next time, Dan?"

"The next time 'twas his ghost in earnest that went to the burial; and a pretty burial it was. O, there's no place like old Ireland for care of the dead! We beat you there entirely, you unnatural ruffians, that never give so much as a howl to your nearest flesh and blood!"

The listeners thought it better and more natural to help the living than to honour the dead. It did not seem to occur to either party that it was possible to do both. The dispute now ran

higher than ever, Murdoch laying the blame on Dan of having made all his resources depend on a favourable season, and Dan defending everything Irish, down to poverty, famines, and pestilential fevers; the first a perpetual, and each of the others a frequent evil. A fight was beginning, when order was restored by an authority which might not be resisted. Mr. Mackenzie was on board, having taken this opportunity of visiting several islands which were under his charge as a magistrate. Seeing the uproar on the quay likely to increase every moment, he stepped on shore, ordered two or three stout men to part the combatants, and gave poor old Murdoch into the care of Angus, who was standing by, desiring that his wants should be supplied, and that he should be sent home out of the reach of provocation from Dan. Angus looked kindly after the interests of his old master, now so humbled as not to resist his help; and then sent a neighbour with him to guard him from robbery on his way home. It might have been thought that Rob would have been the fittest person to undertake this natural duty; but Rob was nowhere to be seen. He had appeared one of the first on the quay, and had bought a supply of food with a little silver crucifix which he had contrived to steal from Noreen, and which she had kept, through all her distresses, as a sort of charm. Rob was now hidden in a snug corner, eating a portion of his provision, and drinking the whiskey for which he had exchanged the rest.

Mr. Mackenzie accepted Angus's invitation to spend the night under his roof. He agreed all the more readily from perceiving that he could gratify the feelings of the parents by taking part in the funeral of their child the next day; by carrying his head to the grave, as the expression is.

Mr. Mackenzie would know from Angus all that he could tell of Murdoch's history, and of what had happened to Dan since he settled in Garveloch. The present state of the island was a subject which always made Angus melancholy. The place was so changed, he said; there were many people that you would scarcely believe to be the same as before their distresses began.

"Such is always the case, Angus, where there are more people than can live without jostling. People act upon opposite maxims according to their circumstances. If there is abundance for every body, they are very ready to cry, 'The more the merrier;' if the provision is scanty, they mutter, 'The fewer the better cheer,' and each snatches what he can for himself."

Ella was at this moment distributing the evening meal. At these very words she placed before her son Kenneth a barley-cake,—the first he had tasted for some time,—with a smile which he well understood. He had known something of the sufferings his mother had described as the consequence of their mutual resolution not to touch the food on which they usually subsisted; but, till this evening, he had supposed the trial only begun, and felt almost ashamed to be re-

leased so soon. As he broke his bread, a blush overspread his whole face; and when he next looked up, he met Ella's eyes filled with tears. Mr. Mackenzie observed, but did not understand; and Angus himself would have found it difficult to explain, though Kenneth's altered looks caused a suspicion that he had exercised more than his share of self-denial.

"I have seen so much of the snatching you speak of, and of defrauding too," said Angus, when all but himself and his guest had withdrawn, "as to make me think we are now little better off than in cities, compared with which I used to think our island a paradise. There has, I believe, been crime enough committed within the circuit of a mile from this place, to match with the alleys and cellars of a manufacturing city. The malice of the people in their speech, the envy in their countenances, the artifices in their management, the violence of their actions, are new to this place and these people. I hoped to have kept my children out of sight and hearing of these things for ever."

"Never nourish such a hope, friend," said Mr. Mackenzie, "unless you can keep want out of sight and hearing too. Virtue and vice depend not on place, but on circumstance. The rich do not steal in cities, any more than the starving respect property in a retired island like this. If we could increase our supply of necessaries and comforts in proportion to the wants and reasonable desires of all, there would be little vice; and if we did no more than rightly estimate and

administer the resources we already possess, we might destroy for ever the worst evils of which society complains."

"Surely, Sir, it might be done, if society were but animated with one mind. It is in the power of few, I suppose, to increase the supply of necessities and comforts perpetually and very extensively; and no power on earth can do it so as to keep pace with the constant demand for them."

"Certainly, if that demand be unchecked."

"I was going to say, Sir, that it is in the power of every one to help to equalize the demand. It seems to me, that whoever acts so as to aggravate want, becomes answerable for the evils caused by want, whether he injures his neighbour's capital, or neglects to improve his own, or increases a demand upon it which is already overwhelming."

"You will be told, friend, if you preach your doctrine to unwilling ears, that one set of vices would rage only the more fiercely for those which result from want being moderated."

"I know," replied Angus, "that some are of opinion that there is always a balance of vices in society; that, as some are extinguished, others arise. This seems to me a fancy that nobody can prove or show to be reasonable."

"I am quite of your opinion, Angus; and if I were not, I am sure I should find it difficult to assert that any set of vices could be more to be dreaded than those which arise from extreme poverty. I would not draw a comparison in

favour of any acknowledged vice over any other ; but I can conceive of no more dreadful degradation of character, no more abundant sources of misery, than arise out of the overpowering temptations of want. You have seen instances, I doubt not, among the lower, as I among the higher classes, of the regular process by which honourable feelings are blunted, kindly affections embittered, piety turned into blasphemy, and integrity into fraud and violence, as the pressure of poverty becomes more and more galling.

“ I have seen so much of this, Sir, as to make me believe that very few, if any, pass through the trial of squalid and hopeless poverty with healthy minds. Moreover, I believe such poverty to be the hot-bed of *all* vices. I shall never be convinced, unless I see it, that any vice in existence will be aggravated by the comforts of life being extended to all, or that there is any which is not encouraged by the feelings of personal injury, of hatred towards their superiors, or recklessness concerning their companions and themselves, which are excited among the abject or ferocious poor.”

“ Evil seems to be an admonition of Providence to men to change that part of their conduct which brings on that evil,” observed Mr. Mackenzie ; “ and happy are they who take the warning in time, or remember it for their future guidance. Extensive fires warn men not to build houses of wood ; pestilence may teach cleanliness and ventilation ; and having thus

given their lesson, these evils become rare, or cease. What, therefore, may famine teach?"

"Care not to let eaters multiply beyond the ordinary supply of food. I hope we people of Garveloch shall take the warning. I am sure it is distinct enough."

"Yes, Angus. You ate up the unusual supply of two abundant seasons. An average one produced hardship. An unfavourable one has brought you to the brink of a famine. This is Providence's way of admonishing."

CHAPTER IX.

TROUBLES NEVER COME ALONE.

THE sufferings of the islanders were not yet over, as all foresaw who were accustomed to watch the succession of events. The natural consequence of a famine in former days was a plague; and it is still too well known in Scotland and Ireland that sickness follows scarcity. Garveloch went through the natural process. There never was such a winter known there as that which succeeded the scarcity. Rheumatism among the aged, consumption among the youthful, all the disorders of infancy among the children, laid waste the habitations of many who thought they had never known sorrow till now.

Many a gray-haired matron, who used to sit plying her distaff in the chimney-corner, and singing old songs to the little ones playing about her, had been shaken by the privations of the summer, and now lay groaning in the torments of the disease which was soon to take her hence, although, with due care, so vigorous a life might still have been preserved for a few years. Here, a father who was anxious to be up and doing for his children, on the sea or at the station, was in danger of coughing his life away if he faced the wintry air, and fretted in idleness within his smoky cottage. There, a mother who had hungered through many a day to feed her children, now found that she had broken down her strength in the effort, and that she must leave them to a care less tender than her own. In other cases, the parent and her little ones seemed hastening together to another world, and two or three of one family were buried in the same grave. The mortality among the children was dreadful. The widow Cuthbert could scarcely believe her own happiness when she saw all her little family daily seated at the board in rosy health and gay spirits, when not a neighbour had been exempt from loss. She would scarcely suffer her boys out of her sight; and if accidentally parted from them, trembled lest she should hear complaints or see traces of illness when she met them again. There had been sickness in Ella's family, but none died after little Jamie. Ronald kept watch over them all. Many were the kind presents, many the welcome indulgences he sent or carried

to the sick members of his sister's and brother's family this year. Katie needed no such assistance. If she had, she would have freely accepted it; but frequent inquiries and much friendly intercourse served quite as well to show the regard these friends bore to each other.

The supplies of food were still so precarious as to make every body anxious except those who could purchase a store. Now and then a boat with provisions came from a distance, and the cod-fishing turned out tolerably productive to those who had health and strength to pursue the occupation. So much was wanted, however, for immediate consumption, that business nearly stood still at the station. Kenneth had been recalled thither when there seemed to be a prospect of employment for him; but he had now made the last barrel that would be wanted before next season, and began to be very melancholy. He sauntered along the pier, around which there was no busy traffic; he lounged about the cooperage, taking up first one tool and then another, and wondering when the hammer and the saw would be heard there again. Many a time did he count the weeks that must pass before he should be once more earning his maintenance, and reckon how large was the debt to his uncle which he was incurring by his present uselessness. Ronald could not succeed in making him cheerful for a day together, or in inducing him to employ himself; and he began to fear that either illness was creeping on the young man, or that his fine spirit was broken by the anxiety h

had undergone and the miseries he had beheld. He would have sent him over to Ella, whose influence was all-powerful with her son; but Ella had cares enough at home just now. Having messages from Kenneth as frequently as usual, she was not more than usually anxious concerning him.

Angus's activity and cheerfulness never gave way. He ascribed their power to his wife's influence; while she found a never-failing support to her energies when he was present. She owned to Katie how easily she could give way to despondency when he was absent for days together, and how she felt strong enough to do and bear anything when his boat came in sight again. The fact was, they did owe to each other all they believed they owed. There was a lofty spirit of trust in Ella, as animating to her husband as his experience in life and devotion to his home were supporting to her. Katie looked with a generous sympathy on the enjoyment of a happiness of which she had been deprived, and wished no more for herself than that she might be as secure from trials with her children as she believed Angus and Ella to be. No sorrows could, she told Ella, be inflicted by the children of such parents—by children so brought up as theirs. Ella never admitted this assurance without reservation; for she knew too much of human life to expect that any one of its blessings should be enjoyed for ever without alloy.

It was during the absence of her husband on one of his trading excursions that the children

came crowding round the door, to ask Ella to come and listen to the new music some gentlemen in fine clothes were playing as they went up the pass. Katie was brought out by her little people at the same moment. The children climbed the height to get another view of the strangers, and their mothers followed. A recruiting party was ascending between the rocks at the same moment that more companies than one were leaving the burying-ground. The children clapped their hands and began to dance to the booming drum and the shrill fife; but Ella immediately stopped them.

“Don't ye mark,” she said, “there's Rob and Meg Murdoch coming down the hill? Would ye like to see anybody dancing in your sight when you have just laid your father's head in the ground?”

“I saw Rob drunk this very morn, mother, and he danced as if his father had been there looking on.”

“If Rob behaves as if he had no feeling, that is no reason why you should seem to think he has none.”

“Look at Meg!” cried another child. “She is laughing as if it was a bridal instead of a funeral.”

Ella was shocked, though not much surprised, to see Meg run forward to meet the soldiers, as if they were old acquaintance, and linger behind with them when her party, including her stupid brother, had cracked their joke and passed on. It occurred to her that Meg's brother-in-law

might be among the soldiers and she said so by way of excuse ; but immediately called the children down from the height, unwilling that such an example of unfeeling levity should remain before their eyes. They were naturally somewhat unwilling to lose sight of the scarlet coats, having never beheld any before.

“ Ye will see such often enough, now, my dears,” said their mother, sighing. “ These people know how to choose their time. The fife is ever merriest when the heart’s music is hushed ; and whenever people are at their wit’s end with want and sorrow, the red-coats come and carry away such as are glad to drown thought and seek change instead of waiting for it.”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied Katie : “ a funeral at the top of the hill, and a recruiting party going to meet it, is natural enough ; and so it would have been to see lads made to drink in the king’s name when their stomachs were craving food. I wondered we had had no recruiting before ; for the worse the times, the more are ready to leave home behind them, and go and serve the king.”

The children understood nothing of all this but that they should see the soldiers again, which indeed was the point which most concerned them at their age. They listened long for the drum—they took turns as scouts to watch which way the soldiers went, and to give notice if they should approach. Now they were traced up to Duff’s farm, heard to play before the

door, and seen to be invited in. After a while, they proceeded with a few followers at their heels, by a roundabout way to the Murdochs' cove. Meg was their guide, walking in front, arm-in-arm with a soldier—a fashion of marching to which it was supposed she had been just drilled. The music being heard approaching behind the rocks, the children scampered off to meet it; and after a considerable time, during which shouts arose which made the mothers wish their boys at home again, the children appeared as the advanced guard of the procession, waving their bonnets, and pretending to march like the grand folks behind them. It was soon apparent that all present were not as happy as they. Meg indeed laughed so as to be heard above the music, and one or two raw lads looked full of pride and heroism, and took off their bonnets from time to time to look at the gay ribbons with which they were ornamented; but all the bustle and noise—nothing remarkable perhaps in an English city, but very astonishing in Garveloch—could not call off attention from a woman's rage, or drown the screams of a woman's scolding voice. The vixen was No-reen; and if ever a vixen had an excuse for her violence, it was she at this moment; for Dan, the husband for whom she had, as she declared, left the beautifullest home of the beautifullest country in the world—Dan, whom she had defended through thick and thin, for having “kilt” her and “murthered” her “babbies,”—Dan, who had said so often that a man needed nothing in

life more than a cabin and a potato-ground, and an "iligant" wife, had enlisted, and was going to leave her and her last remaining child to starve. Had not he a cabin? she wanted to know; and had not he a potato-ground, as good as any at Rathmullin? and had not he called her his "iligant Noreen" before the fancy came across him to break her heart?

Since it did not please Dan to answer her questions, no one else was bound to do so. It was difficult to say whether he was drunk or not. He kissed his wife in return for her cuffs, and behaved like a madman; but such was his way when he was roused to mirth.

Shocked at the sight, Ella was about to withdraw, when Katie expressed her wonder whether this scene was to be acted in all the islands. She had connexions in more than one, and began to be anxious lest some of them should be tempted to go abroad. Ella therefore accosted the sergeant, a goodnatured-looking man, and asked if his recruiting was likely to be prosperous among the islands? He found the people very loyal, he replied, and many fine young men ready to serve their king and country. He should visit every place in the district in turn, and had already made a pretty wide circuit. He had this morning come from Islay.

"You would scarce enlist many there," observed Ella. "A few months ago would have been your best time for Islay; now the fishery begins to open a prospect again."

"I beg your pardon, madam; we have been

particularly successful in Islay." And he pulled out a list of names, displayed it hastily, and was about to put it up again, when Katie snatched it, and after the first glance looked at her friend with such a gaze of anguish as at once told Ella the truth.

"Is Kenneth's name there?" she asked, in a low, hoarse voice.

"That young man," said the sergeant, who had been speaking to one of his people, and did not perceive Ella's emotion, "that young man to whose name you point—and a very fine youth he is, six feet and half an inch—belongs to this place. He is to come over this afternoon to take leave of his family, and proceeds with me in the morning."

Ella retreated hastily towards her own door; she turned round on reaching the threshold, and motioned to Katie not to follow her; but Katie would not be repulsed. With streaming eyes she attempted to make her way by gentle force. Ella recovered her power of speech.

"Leave me, Katie. I can speak to no one but Angus. O Angus! why are you away? O! how shall I tell the news when he comes back?"

When Katie had led her friend into the inner room, she left her to her grief, thinking that the best kindness was to keep watch that no one intruded. The widow felt as if her own heart was bursting when audible tokens once or twice reached her of the fearful conflict which rent the mother's heart. In the fervour of her love and compassion for Ella, she was full of indignation

against him who had caused all this misery; and when this indignation had reached its highest pitch, the latch of the door was uplifted, and Kenneth stood before her. His pale countenance, with its expression of mournful determination, might have disarmed her anger at a moment of less excitement; but Katie would not bestow on him a second glance or a greeting.

"Where is my mother?" he inquired. "My father, I find, is absent."

"Seek her yourself," replied Katie, pointing to the chamber. "If you did not fear to wring her heart, you will scarce shrink from seeing her grief."

"She knows then!" said Kenneth. "I would fain have told her myself——"

"You need not covet the task," replied Katie, her features working convulsively. "You would have cast yourself into the sea before now if you had seen her take the tidings." And the widow gave vent to what was boiling in her mind.

Kenneth did not at first interrupt her; and when he attempted explanation, was not allowed to proceed. Katie had never before been so unreasonable as now on her friend's behalf.

"Make way!" said Kenneth, at length, in strong emotion. "My mother will hear me."

Ella at this moment threw open the door of the chamber, and stood, still trembling but erect, and spoke calmly.

"Katie!" she said, "I thought you had known Kenneth and me better. He has ever been dutiful: why then condemn him unheard?"

I have told you my confidence in him ; and is it kind, then, to make a mockery of my trust ? ”

Katie's anger was now all turned against herself. She cast an imploring look at them both, and rushed out of the house before they could detain her.

“ Bless you, mother, for trusting me ! ” cried Kenneth.

“ But O, my boy, what a sore trial to my trust ! What has possessed ye, Kenneth, that ye must leave us ? When we have suffered together so long, and were beginning to hope together again, what could make ye plunge us into a new trouble ? ”

“ It was hastily done, mother, but done for the best, and not from discontent with home, or a love of wandering. I could not see so clearly as you that times are about to mend. I could not endure to be a burden to uncle Ronald, and my heart was sick with hoping and hoping, and finding nothing to do after all. Then there are so many brothers growing up to fill my place ; and my going will make room for one of them at the station. And then there was the bounty too. I thought I should have had pleasure, mother, in giving you the first purse of money I ever had ; but nothing will give me any pleasure again if you think I have been wilfully wrong.”

“ Not wilfully wrong, Kenneth ; I never thought you could be that—not even in the first moment when——”

She could not proceed. Her son continued :

“ I would fain hear ye say more, mother. O, can ye tell me that you think me right ? ”

“ Do not let it weigh with you, my son, whether I think you judged rightly or not. You felt dutifully and kindly, and you have as much right to judge of your duty as I. You shall never want my blessing nor your father’s. It is to your wish to do your duty that we give our blessing ; and it will therefore follow you over the world.”

Kenneth had much to say on duty to one’s country, and on the question who could best be spared to serve in her armies ; in the pursuit of which argument he brought the proof round to himself. His mother, feeling that the deed could not be undone, encouraged his feelings of patriotism, sanctioned his desire to fulfil a public duty, and contented herself with the silence of dissent when she thought him mistaken.

“ Mother,” cried Kenneth, at length, bursting into tears, “ you make a child of me by treating me like a man. I knew you would be patient, I knew you would be indulgent, but I scarcely hoped that even you could so soon, so very soon, give me the rights I have been so hasty to claim. If you had blamed me, if you had spoken with authority, I could have commanded myself better when it comes to the last.”

“ We are all weak,” murmured Ella, melting also into tears. “ God forbid we should judge one another ! We are least of all fit to do so when our griefs are tossing so as to wreck our judgments. Authority, Kenneth ! No ; this is

not the time for me to use it. If it were merely whether ye should cross to Islay to-day or to-morrow, I might have spoken unawares with authority; but when the question is, what your duty in life is to be, and when that question is already decided, all that a mother can do is to give her blessing."

The many dreary hours of this night were too few for what had to be said and done by the elder members of this mourning family. Soon after daybreak Angus returned; so that Kenneth had not the additional misery of departing in uncertainty whether he should be followed by his father's blessing. Angus had in his young days been sent abroad by a spirit of adventure; so that he was even better prepared than Ella to sympathise in Kenneth's feelings and convictions. He commanded himself when the event was first told him; accompanied his son to a considerable distance; and from the hour of his return spoke to none but Ella of the blank the wanderer's absence caused, or of the anxiety with which he watched for tidings of the war.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

A RECRUITING party was, as Ella had foretold, a frequent sight in Garveloch as long as the distress lasted; and one of the present conse-

quences to her and her husband of the favourable season which followed was, that the red-coats ceased to appear, and the hated sound of the drum and fife to make them start. As soon as the fishery was resumed, there was work enough for all who remained on the island, and therefore little encouragement to serve the king out of his own dominions. News of Kenneth came very rarely—about as often as rejoicings for a victory. Some of Angus's neighbours were wont to come and tell him of such events as if they were certain of bringing welcome news, provided he knew that his son was safe. Fergus's lads, especially, who regretted that they were too young to enlist at the same time with Kenneth, seemed disposed to take the first opportunity of doing so that might occur, and to have no doubt that the best service they could render to their island was to leave it.

"How can you suppose," said Angus to them one day, "that I can rejoice in the slaughter you tell me of? How can you imagine it can give me pleasure to look forward to our strong youths leaving our shores?"

"I thought, uncle," said one—"I am sure I heard somebody say you believed that we wanted thinning, and that war must therefore be a very good thing."

"I said so," said Captain Forbes, who stood within hearing. "You think, Angus, that there are too many people for the supply of food; and therefore the more that die, the better cheer there is for those who remain. Did you not tell Mackenzie so?"

“ Better say at once, sir, that we ought to pray for a pestilence. Better send for our enemies to slaughter us as fast as they can, sparing only a proper number to enjoy what we leave behind.”

“ But I am sure you used to complain of our numbers, Angus, and ascribe our distress to them.”

“ But it does not follow, sir, that I would have them removed by violence. All I wish is, that society should be as happy as it can be made; and it would be somewhat strange to inflict the extremest misery with this view. I never had such a thought, I assure you, as of running into a greater evil to avoid a lesser.”

“ Many people, however, think occasional wars and plagues very good things to keep down the population.”

“ So I have heard, but I think very differently. The one circumstance which, above all others, cheers me respecting the state of society, is that population is, to a considerable extent, checked by better means than formerly. There are fewer lives lost by war, plagues, and the accidents of common life, while the increase of population is not in proportion to the removal of these dreadful checks.”

“ How do you account for this ? ”

“ Marriage is less general, and takes place at a later age—at least among the middling classes, whose example will, I trust, be soon followed by their poorer neighbours. Whenever any one

class gains a clear understanding of the reasons why a thing has been, and why it should no longer be, there is room for hope that other classes will in time enter into their views, and act accordingly. There is hope that governments will in time cease to make war and encourage population,—that is, to call people into existence for the purpose of cutting one another's throat. There is hope that the poor will in time be more eager to maintain than to multiply their families; and then, lads, there will be no more drumming and fifeing in Garveloch, and no need to wander abroad in search of danger and death, in order to show patriotism."

"When will that be, uncle?"

"I am no prophet; but I will venture to prophesy that it will happen somewhere between the third and the thirty-thousandth generation from the present—that is, that it will take place, but not yet."

"You have said a great deal," observed the captain, "about the reasons why there should no longer be want; but you slipped quietly enough over the reason why there has ever been want."

"It was not my intention to do so," said Angus, smiling, "for it appears very clear to me. It was growing need which urged men towards all the improvements which have ever taken place. The appropriation and security of property, improvements in government, art, and

sciences—in short, all the institutions of society took their beginning from the growing wants of men; and those growing wants were caused, of course, by increase of numbers. This is quite enough to satisfy us that the principle of increase is a good one; while, if we see that our institutions can now be preserved and improved under other and higher kinds of stimulus, it is time that we were controlling the principle within the bounds of reason and happiness.”

“It is done for us when we do not look to it ourselves,” the captain replied, ~~sighing as he cast~~ a glance around him. “How full is the burying-ground,—how empty are the houses compared with what they were but a few months ago! It reminds me of some of the places in the east, where we were ordered to march in the rear of the plague. They will soon be filled again, if the fishery does well. That is a comfort.”

“And it reminds me that I have no time to lose,” observed Angus. “Will you be my passenger to the station, captain?”

Nobody had time to lose this season in the island, but those who were willing to run the risk of future scarcity. Labour was in great request, and, of course, well paid. Angus found ample employment for his crane, and received very good interest for the capital laid out upon it. His younger sons worked it with as much zeal as Kenneth had shown in its construction; but their father, proud as he was of them, thought in his inmost heart that no other of his flourishing tribe equalled the eldest, or could make up for

his loss ; and the haunting dream of the night, the favourite vision of the day, was of Kenneth's return, to leave his native land no more. This was Angus's meditation while plying the oar, and this his theme in his own chimney corner. It was much to hear of Kenneth's honour and welfare, but while no hope of peace came with the tidings, they were not perfectly satisfying.

The only person to whom the improvement in the times brought any trouble was the widow Cuthbert. Her former lovers—not Ronald, but those who had broken off acquaintance with her when her young family seemed a dead weight in the scale against her own charms—now returned, and were more earnest than ever in their suit. Katie had discretion enough to be aware that the only respect in which she had become a more desirable match than before was in the growth of her boys, whose labour might soon be a little fortune to her, if she chose so to employ it. She was therefore far from being flattered at becoming so much in request, and honoured and valued the disinterested friendship of Ronald more than ever.

The present time, even with the drawback of Kenneth's absence, was the happiest period of Ronald's life. He made his little home at the station sociable and comfortable, by gathering his nephews and nieces about him ; and his visits to Garveloch became more frequent and more welcome continually when his prosperous business allowed him leisure for the trip. Fergus, weighed down with care, had grown old before

his time; and to Ronald's assistance it was owing that his family preserved their respectability till the lads were able to take on themselves a part of the charge which had been too heavy for their father.

Ella was the last of the family to show the marks of change. Her mind and heart were as remarkable for their freshness in age as they had been for their dignity in youth. Inured to early exertion and hardship, she was equal to all calls upon her energies of body and spirit. She was still seen, as occasion required, among the rocks, or on the sea, or administering her affairs at home. She was never known to plead infirmity, or to need forbearance, or to disappoint expectation. She had all she wanted in her husband's devotion to her and to his home, and she distributed benefits untold from the rich treasury of her warm affections. She had, from childhood, filled a station of authority, and had never abused her power, but made it the means of living for others. Her power increased with every year of her life, and with it grew her scrupulous watchfulness over its exercise, till the same open heart, penetrating eye, and ready hand, which had once made her the sufficient dependence of her orphan brothers, gave her an extensive influence over the weal and woe of Garveloch.

LONDON :
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford Street,]

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

No. VII.

A
MANCHESTER STRIKE.

& Calc.

BY
HARRIET MARTINEAU.

THIRD EDITION.

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NOTICE.

THE author hopes that as she has no acquaintance with any one firm, master, or workman in Manchester, she will be spared the imputation of personality. Her personages are all abstractions.

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A MANCHESTER STRIKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WEEK'S END.

ONE fine Saturday evening in May, 18—, several hundred work-people, men, girls, and boys, poured out from the gates of a factory which stood on the banks of the Medlock, near Manchester. The children dispersed in troops, some to play, but the greater number to reach home with all speed, as if they were afraid of the sunshine that checquered the street and reddened the gables and chimnies.

The men seemed in no such haste; they lingered about the factory, one large group standing before the gates, and smaller knots occupying the street for some distance, while a few proceeded slowly on their way home, chatting with one or another party as they went. One only appeared to have nothing to say to his companions, and to wish to get away quietly, if they would have let him. He was one of the most

respectable looking among them, decent in his dress, and intelligent though somewhat melancholy in countenance. He was making his way without speaking to anybody, when first one and then another caught him by the button and detained him in consultation. All seemed anxious to know what Allen had to relate or to advise; and Allen had some difficulty in getting leave to go home, much as he knew he was wanted there. When he had at length escaped, he walked so rapidly as presently to overtake his little daughter, Martha, who had left the factory somewhat earlier. He saw her before him for some distance, and observed how she limped, and how feebly she made her way along the street, (if such it might be called,) which led to their abode. It was far from easy walking to the strongest. There were heaps of rubbish, pools of muddy water, stones and brickbats lying about, and cabbage-leaves on which the unwary might slip, and bones over which pigs were grunting and curs snarling and fighting. Little Martha, a delicate child of eight years old, tried to avoid all these obstacles; but she nearly slipped down several times, and started when the dogs came near her, and shivered every time the mild spring breeze blew in her face.

"Martha, how lame you are to-day!" said Allen, taking her round the waist to help her onward.

"O father, my knees have been aching so all day, I thought I should have dropped every moment."

"And one would think it was Christmas by your looks, child, instead of a bright May day."

"It is very chill after the factory," said the little girl, her teeth still chattering. "Sure the weather must have changed, father."

No; the wind was south, and the sky cloudless. It was only that the thermometer had stood at 75° within the factory.

"I suppose your wages are lowered as well as mine," said Allen; "how much do you bring home this week?"

"Only three shillings, father; and some say it will be less before long. I am afraid mother—"

The weak-spirited child could not say what it was that she feared, being choked by her tears.

"Come, Martha, cheer up," said her father. 'Mother knows that you get sometimes more and sometimes less; and, after all, you earn as much as a piecer as some do at the hand-loom. There is Field, our neighbour; he and his wife together do not earn more than seven shillings a week, you know, and think how much older and stronger they are than you! We must make you stronger, Martha. I will go with you to Mr. Dawson, and he will find out what is the matter with your knees.'

By this time they had reached the foot of the stairs which led up to their two rooms in the third story of a large dwelling which was occupied by many poor families. Barefooted children were scampering up and down these stairs at play; girls nursing babies sat at various elevations, and seemed in danger of being kicked

down as often as a drunken man or an angry woman should want to pass; a thing which frequently happened. Little Martha looked up the steep stairs and sighed. Her father lifted and carried her. The noises would have stunned a stranger, and they seemed louder than usual to accustomed ears. Martha's little dog came barking and jumping up as soon as he saw her, and this set several babies crying; the shrill piping of a bulfinch was heard in the din, and over all, the voice of a scolding woman.

"That is Sally Field's voice if it is anybody's," said Allen. "It is enough to make one shift one's quarters to have that woman within hearing."

"She is in our rooms, father. I am sure the noise is there; and see, her door is open and her room empty."

"She need not fear leaving her door open," observed a neighbour in passing. "There is nothing there that anybody would wish to carry away."

Allen did not answer, but made haste to restore peace in his own dwelling, knowing that his wife was far from being a match for Sally Field. As he flung open the door, the weaker party seemed to resign the contest to him; his wife sank into a chair, trembling all over. Her four or five little ones had hidden themselves where they could, some under the table, some behind the bed, having all been slapped or pushed or buffeted by Sally for staring at her with their thumbs in their mouths. She was not aware that Sally Field in a passion was a sight to make any one stare.

Allen carried Martha to a seat in preparation for turning out Sally Field and locking the door upon her, which he meant to do by main force if gentler means should fail. Her surprise at seeing him, however, and perhaps some degree of awe of his determined countenance, made her pause for a moment.

“What is all this, wife?” inquired Allen.

“I am sure I don’t know. Sally has been rating me and the children this hour past, and heaven knows what for.”

Sally proceeded upon this to declare a long list of offences of which Allen’s family had been guilty towards her, and Allen suffered her to go on till she had exhausted her breath. When at length she lost her voice—a catastrophe which happens sooner or later to all scolds,—he took up the word.

“I’ll tell you what, Sally,” said he; “I am very sorry for you, and very much ashamed of you, and I should be more angry on my wife’s account than you ever saw me if I did not know you well, and understand what is at the bottom of all this. Remember, Sally, I have known you and your husband since you were this high, as well as if you had been children of my own. Don’t put me in mind how young you are. Don’t make me treat you like a child when you have taken upon you so early to be a woman. Don’t make me call your husband to take care of you as if you could not take care of yourself.”

“Call him! call him and welcome, if you

can find him," cried Sally. "Show me where he is, and I'll find a better use for my tongue than in scolding your mean-spirited wife there that looks as if she were going to die whenever one speaks. Go, pray, call my husband."

"Aye, aye; that's the grievance, I see," said Allen. "We all have our grievances, Sally, and it is great folly to make them worse of our own accord. Do you expect to tempt your husband to stay at home with you by scolding as you were doing just now?"

"Do you leave your wife for the twenty-four hours together?" cried Sally. "Do you make yourself drunk with your last shilling?—and yet any man had rather see his wife in a passion now and then than have her such a poor, puny, crying creature as your wife is."

"Hush, hush, mistress!" interrupted Allen. "I will lock the door upon you this moment, and would have done it before but that you would raise a mob in the street if I turned you out. Sally, you know you have not a friend in the world if you quarrel with us, and what will you do with your sore heart then?"

The poor creature's passion now dissolved in tears. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed bitterly. She was left to herself for some time. Allen produced his week's wages, and settled with his wife how they should be disposed of, and persuaded her to go out herself and make the necessary purchases, saying that he would search for Field and try to get him home. Allen's wife sighed,

“ You are not afraid to trust me in an ale-house ? ” said he smiling.

“ Bless your heart, no ; that I never was nor ever shall be : but I was thinking of what you said, that we all have our grievances. Here is three shillings less wages this week.”

“ Yes, and another sixpence off Martha’s too : but don’t fret, wife ; we must do as others do, and be glad if nothing worse happens. See to poor Martha’s knees before you go out ; she is more lame than ever to-day.—And now, Sally, if you will promise me to go to your own room, and stay there till I bring your husband back, and if you will give me your word to keep the peace with him whatever he may have been doing, I will go and search him out, and see what I can do to make him behave better to you.”

Sally promised to keep the peace, but begged to stay and take care of the children till their mother should return. Seeing however that Martha looked up beseechingly in her father’s face, and that the little ones clung to their mother’s apron, she cursed herself for having deserved that they should be afraid of her, and ran down to bolt herself into her own room and recover her composure as she might.

As there was no fire, and as Martha was very discreet for her years, the parents promised the children to lock them up, that no scold might come and terrify them while they had to take care of themselves. Martha was advised to sit still, and her bulfinch was taken down from the window and placed beside her to be fed and watered ; the other little things promised to be

good, and their father and mother went, the one to the Spread-Eagle and the other to the market.

It required no great sagacity to prophesy that Field would be found at the Spread-Eagle. He varied his excursions a little, according to times and seasons : but those who knew his ways could easily guess at which of his haunts he might be expected when missing from home. When he stole out before getting to his loom in the morning, or after leaving it late at night, he generally stepped only to the dram-shop, for a glass of gin to warm him for his work, or to settle him to his sleep, as his pretence was ; but when he had finished his piece and got his pay, he felt himself at liberty to go to the Spread-Eagle and have a carouse, from which he returned in the dark, sometimes reeling on his own legs, sometimes carried on other men's shoulders. This habit of drinking had grown upon him with frightful rapidity. He had, a year before, been described by his employers as a steady, well-behaved lad. He had fallen in love with Sally and married her in a hurry, found her temper disagreeable and his home uncomfortable, tried in vain to keep her in order, and then, giving up all hope, took to drinking, and would not tolerate a word of remonstrance from any one but his old friend Allen.

There were more customers this evening at the Spread-Eagle than was usual even on Saturdays. Allen was warmly welcomed as he entered, for it was supposed he came to keep company with his companions from the same factory. Almost

all present were spinners and power-loom weavers under the firm of Mortimer and Rowe; and the occasion of their assembling in greater numbers than usual, was the reduction of wages which had that day taken place. Room was made for Allen as soon as he appeared, a pipe and pot of porter called for, and he was welcomed to their consultation. But Allen looked round instead of taking his seat, and inquired for Field. The landlord pointed to a corner where Field lay in a drunken sleep under a bench.

"Let him lie," said one. "He is too far gone to be roused."

"What concern is it of yours?" cried another.

"Come and listen to what Clack was saying."

"You shirked us in the street," said a third: "now we have caught you, we shall not let you go."

The landlord being really of opinion that Field had better lie where he was for an hour or two, Allen sat down to hear what was going on.

Clack turned to him to know what their masters deserved for lowering their wages.

"That depends upon circumstances," replied Allen. "Be they much to blame or little, something must be done to prevent a further reduction, or many of us will be ruined."

"Shake hands, my fine fellow!" cried Clack. "That was just what we had agreed. It is time such tyranny was put down, and we can put it down, and we will."

"Gently, gently," said Allen. "How do you think of putting it down?"

“ Why should not we root out the one who is the most of a tyrant, and then the others may take warning before it is too late? We have nothing to do but to agree.”

“ No easy matter sometimes, friend.”

“ Stuff! we have agreed before upon a less occasion, and when there was danger in it. Had not we our combinations, when combination was against the law? and shall not we have them again now that the law lets us alone? Shall we be bold in the day of danger and shrink when that day is over?”

“ Well, well, neighbour: I said nothing about being afraid. What would you have us agree to do?”

“ To root out Messrs. Mortimer and Rowe. Every man in our union must be sworn not to enter their gates; and if this does not frighten the masters and make them more reasonable, I don't know what will.”

“ And if, instead of being frightened, the masters unite to refuse us work till we give up our stand against Mortimer and Rowe, what are we to do then?”

“ To measure our strength against theirs, to be sure. You know they can't do without us.”

“ Nor we without them; and where both parties are so necessary to each other, it is a pity they should fall out.”

“ A pity! To be sure it is a pity; but if the masters drive us to it, the blame rests with them.”

“ I hope,” said a timid-looking man, Hare by

name, who had a habit of twirling his hat when silent, and of scratching his head when he spoke, "I hope, neighbour, you will think what you are about before you mention a strike. I've seen enough of strikes. I had rather see my children on the parish than strike."

Clack looked disdainfully at him, and said it was well that some dove-like folks had not to manage a fight against the eagle. For his part, he thought any man ought to be proud of the honour of making a stand against any oppression; and that he had rather, for his own share, have the thanks of the Union Committee than wear Wellington's star. Would not his friend Allen say the same?

No. Allen agreed with Hare so far as thinking that there could be few worse evils than a strike; but at the same time it was an evil which might become necessary in certain cases. When convinced that it was necessary in defence of the rights of the working-man, he would join in it heart and hand; but never out of spite or revenge,—never to root out any master breathing.—So many agreed in this opinion, that Clack grew more eager than ever in defending himself and blaming the masters in question.

"Dare any one say," he cried, "that the Dey of Algiers himself is a greater tyrant than Mortimer would be if he dared? Does not he look as if he would trample us under foot if he could? Does not he smile with contempt at whatever is said by a working-man? Does not he spurn every complaint, and laugh at every threat? and

if he takes it into his lofty head to do a kindness, does not he make it bitter with his pride?"

"All true, Clack, as everybody knows that works for Mortimer; but——"

"And as for Rowe," interrupted the talker, "he is worse, if possible, in his way."

"I don't know," said Hare, doubtfully. "Mr. Rowe came once and talked very kindly with me."

"Aye, when he had some purpose to answer. We are all, except you, Hare, wise enough to know what Rowe's pretty speeches mean. You should follow him to the next masters' meeting, man, and hear how he alters his tone with his company. The mean-spirited, shuffling knave!"

"Well, well, Clack; granting that Mortimer is tyrannical and Rowe not to be trusted,—that does not alter the case about rooting them out. To make the attempt is to acknowledge at the outset that the object of our union is a bad one: it will fill the minds of the operatives with foul passions and provoke a war between masters and men which will end in the destruction of both. Whenever we do strike, let it be in defence of our own rights, and not out of enmity to individuals among our employers."

Clack muttered something about there being shufflers among the men as well as the masters; to which Allen replied that the way to make shufflers was to use intimidation. The more wisdom and moderation there was in the proceedings of any body of men, the better chance

there was of unanimity and determination. He repeated that, as long as the Union of which he was a member kept in view the interests of the body of operatives, he would be found ready to do and to sacrifice his share; but as soon as it should set to work on other objects, he should withdraw at all risks.

Before he had done speaking, the attention of his companions was called off by an unexpected addition to their company. Music had been heard gradually approaching for some minutes, and now the musician stood darkening the door and almost deafening the people within with the extraordinary variety of sounds he produced. An enormous drum was strapped across his body; a Pan's pipe employed his mouth, and his hat, with a pointed crown and a broad brim, was garnished with bells. A little girl, fantastically dressed, performed on the triangle, and danced, and collected halfpence from the bystanders. While the musician played a jig, jerking his head incessantly from side to side, nobody thought of looking particularly at him: but when he turned to the company within doors and set his little companion to sing to his playing.

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,”

several of the debaters began to fancy that they knew the face and figure of the musician. “It is—yes, it certainly is Bray!” said one to another; and many a hand was held out to him.

“I thought you were not likely to forget old acquaintance, even if they come in a new dress,”

said Bray, laughing heartily, and proceeding to deposit his decorations with one or another of his former companions. He put his hat on Allen's head, slipped the strap of his drum over Clack's shoulders, and gave the triangle to Hare.

"Come," said he, "let us have a concert. It is my turn to see spinners turn strollers. Come, Allen, shake your head, man, and let us hear what comes out of it."

"How we have wondered," exclaimed Allen, "what had become of you and yours! Is that poor little Hannah that used to be so delicate?"

"The same that your good wife nursed through the measles. She would hardly know her now."

Allen shook his head.

"Ah, I see what you mean," said Bray. "You had rather see her covered with white cotton flakes than with yellow ribands; but remember it is no fault of mine that she is not still a piecer in yonder factory; and I don't know that I need call it my misfortune any more than my fault. Look how strong and plump she is! so much for living in the open air, instead of being mewed up in a place like an oven. Now, don't take off the hat on purpose to shake your head. What can a man do——" and looking round, he appealed to the company, "what can a proscribed man do but get his living, so as not to have to ask for work?"

A loud clapping and shuffling of feet was the answer to his question. The noise half roused

the drunken man in the corner, who rolled himself over to the terror of little Hannah, who had got as far as she could out of the way of the smokers, among whom her father had been so well received. Allen rose to go, having some hope that Field might be safely set on his legs again by this time. He asked Bray whether he meant to stay in the neighbourhood, and where he would lodge.

"You must stay," cried one, "and play a tune before your old masters' gates."

"You must stay," said another, "and see how we manage a strike now-a-days."

"A strike! Are you going to try your strength again? You will make me wish I was one of you still; but I can head the march. Stay? Yes, I'll stay and lead you on to victory. Hurra! I'll go recruiting with my drum. I'll manage to meet Mortimer, when I have a procession a mile long at my heels!"

"You lay by your drum on Sundays, I suppose?" said Allen.

"Yes, yes. We keep within and take our rest on Sundays. It is as great a treat to us to sit within doors all day once a week, as it is to some other folks to get into the green meadows. If the landlord can give us lodging, you will find us here in the morning, Allen."

"Let Hannah go home with me, Bray. I know my wife will be glad to see her and to hear her story, and this is no place for a child. If I can rouse yon sleeper, I will go now, and send my wife with a cloak or something to hide

the child's frippery, and then she will spend to-morrow in a fitter place than a public-house."

Bray sat gravely looking at his child for a few moments, and then started up, saying that he would undertake to rouse the sleeper. Blowing the Pan's pipe close by his ear made him start, and a rub-a-dub on the drum woke him up effectually: so that he was able, cross and miserable, to crawl homewards with the help of Allen's arm, and to be put to bed by his wife with the indistinct dread in his mind of a terrible lecture as soon as he should be in a condition to listen to it.

CHAPTER II.

CHILD'S GOSSIP.

MUCH business was transacted at the Spread-Eagle on the Sunday by the Committee of the Union. It was the general opinion that a great struggle between masters and men was on the eve of taking place, and measures were adopted for finding out what was the disposition of the operative spinners respecting a general strike, if an equalization of wages was not to be obtained by other means. It had been agreed on the Saturday night that twenty-five members of the Union should employ the Sunday in obtaining the

names of as many as were willing to turn out, or to subscribe for the assistance of those who should turn out, in case of opposition from the masters. These twenty-five men were to bring in their reports on Sunday night ; after which, if the affair should look promising, a petition was to be addressed to the masters, for a public meeting, at which an equalization of wages was to be agreed on.

Clack was somewhat at a loss how to apportion his own business, and that of other people, on this occasion. Having a very high opinion of his own powers of persuasion, and being confident of his knowledge of law, he wanted to be everywhere at once, and to guide all the movements of the people he employed. As this was impossible, however, he thought it best to remain in some known place of appeal where parties might come to him for direction and information. He therefore sat at the Spread-Eagle all day big with importance, and dissatisfied only because his underlings could not be about their business abroad, and listening to him at the same time.

The Allens knew nothing of what was going forward. Mrs. Allen was so full of interest and curiosity about little Hannah Bray, that she had no thoughts to bestow on public affairs, as the transactions of the Union were commonly called. Her husband had gone early into the country with Bray this day dressed like other people, to visit some relations of the latter, who did not know what had become of him after he had been

refused employment in Manchester, and obliged to betake himself to some new mode of obtaining a livelihood.

Little Hannah slept till the sun was high on the Sunday morning, and might have slept longer if Mrs. Allen had not feared she would not get breakfast over in time for church. Hannah jumped up with the excuse that the place was so quiet, there was nothing to wake her.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Allen. "We think the children and the neighbours make a great deal of noise; but I suppose you sleep in public-houses for the most part."

Hannah observed that people call so loud for what they want in public-houses, and they care so little for hours, that there is no knowing when you may sleep quietly.

"Have you no other frock than that, my dear?" asked Mrs. Allen. "I suppose you go to church on Sundays, and you cannot possibly go in all those gay ribands."

"O no," said Hannah. "I have a dark frock for Sundays, and a straw bonnet; but they are in father's pack, and I suppose that is at the Spread-Eagle."

"And he is gone into the country for the day. Well, you must change with Martha when church time comes. Poor Martha has but one tidy frock; but she is too lame to go out to-day, even as far as the apothecary's; and I am sure she will lend you her frock and tippet to go to church in."

Martha was willing to lend but had rather put on her factory dress than Hannah's red frock with yellow trimmings. Hannah hinted that she should like to stay within with Martha all day ; and the indulgent mother, seeing Martha's pleasure at the prospect of a companion and nurse of her own age, left the little girls to amuse themselves, while she took the younger children to church with her as usual.

" Father says he heard you sing last night," said Martha when they were left alone. " Will you sing to me ? "

" I am so tired of singing ! " pleaded Hannah. " I don't know many songs, and I sing them so very often ! Won't that bird do as well ? Let me get down the cage, may I ? "

" Yes, do, and we will give him some water, poor fellow ! He is my bird and I feed him every day. Somebody that could not afford to keep him sold him to father, and father gave him to me. Had you ever a bird ? "

" No, but I had a monkey once. When we went away, father got a monkey, and I used to lead him about with a string ; but I was glad when we had done with him, he was so mischievous. Look here how he tore my arm one day, when somebody had put him in a passion with giving him empty nutshells."

" What a terrible place ! " said Martha. " Was it long in getting well ? "

" No ; father got an apothecary to tie it up, and it soon got well."

" My father is going to show my knees to

Mr. Dawson, the apothecary. Do look how they are swelled; and they ache so, you can't think."

"O, but I can think, for mine used to ache terribly when I walked and stood before the wheels all day."

"But yours were never so bad as mine, or I am sure you could not dance about as you do."

"Not so bad, to be sure, and my arms were never so shrunk away as yours. Look, my arm is twice as big as yours."

"I wonder what's the reason," sighed Martha. "Mother says I get thinner and thinner."

"You should have meat for dinner every day as I have," said Hannah, "and then you would grow fat like me. Father gets such good dinners for us to what we used to have. He says 'tis that, and being in the air so much that prevents my being sickly, as I used to be. I don't think I could do the work that I used to do with all that noise, and the smell of oil and the heat."

"And I am sure I could not sing and dance as you do."

"No, how should you dance when you are so lame?"

"And I don't think I can sing at all."

"Come, try, and I will sing with you. Try 'God save the king.'"

"It is Sunday," said Martha gravely.

"Well, I thought people might sing 'God save the king' on Sundays. I have heard father play it on the drum, just before the Old Hundred. You know the Old Hundred."

Martha had heard this hymn-tune at church, and she tried to sing it; but Hannah burst out a laughing.

"Lord! Martha, your voice is like a little twittering bird's. Can't you open your mouth and sing this way?"

"No, I can't," said Martha, quite out of breath; "and besides, Hannah, you should not say 'Lord!' Father and mother never let us say those sort of words."

"Nor my father either. He is more angry with me for that, than for anything; but it slips out somehow, and you would not wonder if you knew how often I hear people say that, and many worse things."

"Worse things?" said Martha, looking curious.

"Yes; much worse things; but I am not going to tell you what they are, because father made me promise not to tell you about any of the bad people that I have heard swear and seen tipsy. Was your father ever tipsy?"

"Not that I know of; but our neighbour Field is often tipsy. I am afraid every day that he will topple down stairs."

"My father was tipsy once," said Hannah, "and he beat me so, you can't think."

"When? Lately?"

"No, just after we began to stroll. Though it is so long ago, I remember it very well, for I was never so frightened in my life. I did not know where to go to get away from him; and the people pushed him about and laughed at me the

more the more I cried. I asked him afterwards not to get tipsy any more, and he said he never would, and he never has. It was only because we had got more money that day than we ever got in a day before: but it soon went away, for when father woke the next morning, his pocket was quite empty."

"And did you soon get some more money?"

"O yes; we get some every day except Sundays. I carry the hat round every time we stop to play, and I always get some halfpence and sometimes a silver sixpence."

"Ah! then, you get a great deal more than I do, Hannah. I brought home only three shillings this week."

"I take much more than that, to be sure; but then it is my father's earning more than mine. His great drum sounds farther and brings more people to listen than my triangle."

"Is your triangle here? I wish you would teach me to play," said Martha. "Now do. If you will, I will ask mother to show us the pictures in grandfather's bible when she comes home."

Hannah had been very fond of these pictures when she was recovering from the measles; and this bribe and her goodnature together overcame her disgust at the instrument she had to play every day and almost all day long. She indulged herself with a prodigious yawn, and then began her lesson. When Mrs. Allen came back, she found the bulfinch piping at his loudest pitch to the accompaniment of the triangle, Hannah

screaming her instructions to her new pupil, and poor palefaced little Martha flushed with flattery and with the grand idea of earning a great many silver sixpences every day if her father would let her make music in the streets instead of going to the factory.

CHAPTER III.

NO UNION OF MASTERS.

THE achievements of the twenty-five who canvassed for support during Sunday were such as to put Clack into high spirits. The list of names with signatures or marks annexed, amounted to several thousands; and if the orator had been allowed to have his own way, he would have proclaimed war against the masters at once, and the turn-out would have begun on the Monday morning: but there were a few soberer folks than himself engaged in the consultation; and these smiled at his brag of the many thousand pounds that would pour in from Leeds, Coventry, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other places, and insisted upon offering the masters the option of a peaceable agreement before any measures of opposition were taken.

Clack retorted that these men were afraid of their wives, and declared that they might wait

long for a strike if it was necessary to refrain till the women voted for it, since there was never a woman yet who did not hate a turn-out as she would the plague.

This observation called forth some joke at his expense, for Clack was known to be engaged to be married, and it was thought he spoke from awkward experience. In the eagerness of defence he went a step too far. He asked if it was likely, knowing the disposition of the women on this subject, that he should consult any woman breathing as to the part he should take, or provoke opposition from any female tongue, or care for it if he should happen to meet with it. These words were, as he might have expected, carried to the ears which should never have heard them, and prevented his next meeting with his betrothed from being the pleasantest in the world. While a storm was brewing at a distance in consequence of his indiscreet boast, Clack made himself very merry with those who were less bold than himself.

“Where is Hare to-day? Henpecked, I warrant. Did not he promise faithfully to be one of the twenty-five?”

“Yes, and he is no where to be found,” said a neighbour.

“But I wonder, Clack, you troubled yourself to take a promise from such a shilly-shally fellow as Hare. His being married has nothing to do with it: he was never in the same mind for an hour together from his youth up.”

“How did he get married then?”

“ O there was another and a steadier mind concerned in that matter, you know: not that I mean any harm against his wife: she is as mild as she is sensible. I only mean that her judgment strengthens his when they have to act together.”

“ Then I suppose she does not like the idea of a strike any better than the other women, and persuades him not to come ?”

“ More likely she knows nothing of it. If there is one thing rather than another that Hare is afraid of, it is combination. That imprisonment of his father under the old combination laws made him a coward for life; and there is no use in telling him that the law leaves us to manage our own business now as long as we keep the peace.”

“ He does, indeed, make a pitiful figure between his dread of belonging to the Union and his horror of being left out. But why do we waste our breath upon him? Who has seen Allen to-day, and why does he not come? We shall count his modesty for backwardness if he does not take care.”

“ Don't be in a hurry to blame a better man than yourself,” said a neighbour. “ Allen has been in the country all day.”

There was no offence in such a comparison; for Allen was generally looked up to as the first man in that branch of the Union, though he was so little aware of his own merits that he did not come forward so much as he should have done, except on urgent occasions; and then he never failed to do all that was expected of him.

When the petition to the masters to hold a public meeting was prepared, and when Clack had appointed himself and two others to carry it round the next day, the Committee terminated their present sitting.

The first ~~set~~ to which the deputies addressed their petition was that of Mortimer and Rowe.

"Are the partners at home?" they inquired.

"I don't know whether Mr. Mortimer is here yet, but there is Mr. Rowe. Sir! Mr. Rowe!" called the clerk, as he saw the junior partner making his escape, "these men wish to speak with you, sir, if you please."

Mr. Rowe, perceiving that he had been seen, came forward to be spoken with.

"A public meeting,—equalization of wages,—aye, very fair: hum! very well, my good fellows. Well: what do you want me to do?"

"To give your voice in favour of this public meeting."

"Why, you know you have a good friend in me. You surely cannot anticipate any difficulty with me. I am a friend of peace, you know. No man more so."

"Aye, sir: but there is more than one sort of peace. The masters have called it peace when they had all their own way, and their men were cowed by the law and dared not openly resist. The men call it peace when the two parties have confidence in each other, and make a cordial agreement, and keep to it. This is what we want at the present time."

So said Gibson, whose turn it was to be

spokesman; but Clack could not help putting in his word.

“And if either party refuses peace, you know, sir, the next thing is war.”

“O, no war!” said Mr. Rowe. “A cordial agreement, as you say, is the right thing. So, for this purpose you wish for a public meeting. Well; I shall be happy to attend a public meeting, if——”

“We are happy to find you so agreeable, sir. Will you just sign for self and partner, if you please.”

“Sign! I see no signatures.”

“Because you happen to be the first person we have applied to, sir; that is all. We hope for signatures plenty before the day is over. Will you please to sign, as you approve of the meeting?”

Mr. Rowe suddenly recollected that he must consult his partner who sat in a back room. The men had not to wait long. The junior partner, indeed, did not appear again, but Mr. Mortimer issued forth, looking not a whit less haughty than usual. He begged the deputies would make the best of their way off his premises, as he had nothing to say to them.

What were his sentiments respecting the meeting, if they might inquire?

His sentiments were, that the masters had been far too tolerant already of the complaints of the men; and that it was time the lower orders were taught their proper place. He had neither lei-

sure nor inclination to argue with any of them, either there or elsewhere; so the sooner they took themselves off the better.

"You may live to change your sentiments, sir," observed Gibson.

"Beware of threats!" said Mr. Mortimer. "There is law yet for the punishment of threats, remember."

"I have neither forgotten the law, Mr. Mortimer, nor used threats. I said, and I say again, you may live to change your sentiments; and, for your own sake, it is to be hoped you will. Good morning, sir."

"He is too busy even to wish us good morning," observed Clack. "How coolly he looked over the letter he took from his clerk, as if we were not worth attending to for a moment!"

"Haughty as he is," said Gibson, "I would sooner bear with his pride than Rowe's behaviour or Elliot's."

"They are young men, Gibson, and Mortimer is old, and we would sooner bear with an old man's mistakes than a young man's, be they what they may! Where next? To Elliott's?"

"Yes, we are sure of being ill-treated there; so the sooner it is over the better."

As they approached Mr. Elliott's house, they perceived that gentleman mounted on his favourite hunter, and in the act of leaving his own door. He was too much occupied with his own affairs to see them coming, for the most important part of his morning's business was setting off for his ride; and he had eyes for little else

while he was admiring the polish of his boots, adjusting his collar, settling the skirts of his coat, and patting his horse's neck. Clack was not the man for ceremony; he came straight up before the horse, and laid his hand on the handsome new rein, saying, "By your leave, sir—"

"Hands off," cried Elliott, giving him a cut across the knuckles with his riding-whip. "How dare you stop me? How dare you handle my rein with your greasy fingers?"

"How would you get such a rein, I wonder, sir, if we did not grease our fingers in your service?" said Clack, indignantly.

"I'm in a hurry," said Elliott; "you can speak to the people within, if you want any thing."

"We will not detain you, sir," said Taylor, who was now spokesman, "but nobody but yourself can answer our question." And he told the story in a few words, and put the petition into the gentleman's hands.

Elliott glanced his eye over it as well as the restlessness of his horse would permit, and then struck it contemptuously with his riding-whip into the mud, swore that that was the proper place for such a piece of insolence, rode up against the men, and pranced down the street without bestowing another look or word upon them.

"Pride comes before a fall; let the gentleman take care of himself," said Gibson, quietly picking up the petition and wiping off the mud with his handkerchief.

Clack talked about using his greasy fingers to cram the soiled petition down the gentleman's

throat, and seemed disposed to harangue the laughing bystanders; but his more prudent companions took him by the arm and led him away. Mr. Elliott's clerk, who had seen the whole proceeding from an upper window, and was ashamed of his master's conduct, came after them, out of breath, to ask them in while he copied the petition, which was not, as he observed, fit to show to any other gentleman. Gibson thanked him for his civility, but observed that the soiled paper would tell part of their story better than they could tell it themselves. The clerk, therefore, slowly returned, saying to himself that it is a pity when young men, coming to a large fortune obtained in trade, forget by whose means their wealth was acquired, and by what tenure it is held.

After visiting several manufacturers, some of whom were more and others less favourable to their claims than they expected, the deputies requested an interview with Mr. Wentworth. Mr. Wentworth had been rich as a young man, had failed through unavoidable misfortunes, and had worked his way up again to a competence, after having paid every shilling he owed. He was now an elderly man, homely in his person, somewhat slovenly in his dress, not much given to talk, and, when he did speak, causing some surprise and weariness to strangers by the drawling twang of his speech. Those who knew him well, however, had rather hear his voice than any music; and such of his men as belonged to the Union agreed that ten words from him were worth a speech of an hour long from Clack. There was,

to be sure, no need for so many words from him as from other people, for he practised a great variety of inarticulate sounds, the meaning of which was well understood by those accustomed to converse with him, and served all the purposes of a reply.

Mr. Wentworth was sitting at his desk when the deputies were introduced. As they uncovered their heads and made their bow, some murmurings and clutterings reached them which they understood as a welcome. He looked steadily at them from under his shaggy eyebrows while they explained their business, and then took the petition to look over.

"You can hardly have any paper-makers in your Union," said he, chuckling as he unfolded the sheet; "or are you saving your pence against a strike, that you can't afford paper as fair as your writing?"

"Aye, aye; wait a while and you will see him grow wiser," was his observation on hearing the story of Elliott's insolence. "We were all boys before we were men.—Hum:—equalization.—Who will avouch that this equalization is all that you want?"

"I, sir," said the ever-ready Clack—"I drew it up, and so I ought to know."

Gibson observed, that though no further object was expressly contemplated by the Union, he would not answer for their not increasing their demands as they proceeded. If there was any attempt to equalize the wages by reducing all to the lowest now given, the Union would demand an advance.

"Who gives the lowest?" inquired Mr. Wentworth.

"Except some upstarts whom we can easily manage, Mortimer and Rowe give the lowest, and you, sir, the next lowest, and Elliott the highest."

"Who was lamenting lately that the combination laws were repealed, so that the masters cannot be prosecuted for oppression? Who proposed to burn them in effigy, tied to one another's necks?"

The deputies looked at one another, and then answered that all this was only private talk of one of their meetings; it was never meant for earnest.

"Well, I only let you know that you may look about your Committee-room and find where the little bird builds that carries the matter; and if you can't find her, take care that she has nothing to carry that you would be ashamed to own. Did you learn from her that the masters combine against you?"

"We learn it from our own eyes, and ears, and senses," said Clack. "Have not masters oppressed their men from the beginning of the world?"

"Indeed I don't know," said Mr. Wentworth. "If Adam had a gardener under him in Paradise, they might have tried to turn one another out, but I never heard of it."

"Stuff and nonsense, sir, begging your pardon. Don't we know that masters always have lorded it over the poor? They were born with a silver spoon in their mouths, and——"

"I wonder where mine is," observed Mr. Wentworth; "I will look in my mother's plate chest for it."

The orator went on,—

"They openly treat us like slaves as long as they can, and when we will bear it no longer, they plot in secret against us. They steal to one another's houses when they think we are asleep; they bolt their doors and fill their glasses to their own prosperity, and every bumper that goes down their throats is paid for with the poor man's crust."

"They must have made the little bird tipsy, Clack, before she carried you such a strange story as that."

"Don't tell me, sir, that it is not true! Don't tell me!"

"I am not telling you anything; for the plain reason, that I have nothing to tell. I only want to ask you one or two things, as you seem to know so much more than we do. Pray what have the masters combined for just now?"

"To lower our wages, to be sure."

"And yet Mortimer pays one rate, and I another, and Elliott another. Why don't I ask as much labour for my money as Mortimer?"

"You dare not," cried Clack.

"You know it's not fair," said Taylor.

"You are not the man to grind the poor," said Gibson.

"You have not hit it, any of you. You all seem to think it is a matter of pure choice with us, what wages we give."

"To be sure," said Clack, "and that is the reason we want parliament to settle the matter at once and for ever."

"Parliament has no more choice in the matter than we masters," drily observed Mr. Wentworth. "If ever Parliament passes a Bill to regulate wages, we must have a rider put to it to decree how much rain must fall before harvest."

Clack muttered something about not standing any longer to be trifled with; but his companions thought it possible that Mr. Wentworth might have something to say that was worth hearing, and persuaded the orator to be quiet. Gibson inquired,—

"Where then does the choice rest, sir, if neither with the government nor the masters?"

"Such power as there is rests with those who take, not with those who give wages. Not such power as tips our friend's tongue there," nodding at Clack, "not such power as you gain by the most successful strike, not such power as combination gives you, be it peaceable or threatening; but a much more lasting power which cannot be taken from you. The power of the masters is considerable, for they hold the administration of capital; but it is not on this that the rate of wages depends. It depends on the administration of labour; and this much greater power is in your hands."

The deputies thought that they who pay wages must always have power over those who receive.

"That is as much as saying that wages are a gift. I thought you had supposed them your right,"

All were eager to urge the rights of industry.

"Aye, all very true; no right can be clearer when we see what wages are. Come, Clack, tell us, (for who knows if you don't?) tell us what wages Adam gave his under gardeners. You can't say? Why, I thought you knew all that the masters did at the beginning of the world. Well, when Adam was some hundred years old, (you may trust me, for I am descended from him in a straight line,) he said to Eve, 'Stay you here and spin with the women, while I go yonder and set my men to delve; and don't expect us back in a hurry, for tillage is tough work here to what it was in Eden, and we must gather our crops before we can bring them to market. Come, my good fellows, work hard and you shall have your shares.' 'And pray, sir,' said the men, 'what are we to live upon while our fruit and vegetables are growing?' 'Why,' says Adam, 'instead of my sharing the fruit with you when it is grown, suppose you take your portion in advance. It may be a convenience to you, and it is all the same thing to me.' So the men looked at the ground, and calculated how much digging and other work there would be, and then named their demand; not in silver money with king George's head upon it, but food and clothing, and tools.'

"Then at harvest time," observed Gibson, "the whole produce belonged to Adam?"

"Of course. The commodity was made up, like all commodities, of capital and labour: Adam's capital and the men's labour."

“ And of a deal besides,” cried Clack. “ I it was grain, there was the root, and the stalk, and the ear ; and if it was fruit, there was the rind, and the pulp, and the juice.”

“ Begging your pardon, friend, there was nothing but capital and labour. Without labour, and the soil and the tools which made the capital, there would have been neither grain nor fruit ; and if grain and fruit grew wild, they could be no commodity without labour, any more than the diamond in the mine, and the pearl in the sea, are a commodity before the one is dug, and the other fished up. Well, Adam and his men expected to get as much by their crop as would pay for their subsistence and their toil ; and this much the men asked, and Adam was willing to give, and a fair surplus remained over for himself. So they made their bargain, and he bought their share of the commodity, and had to himself all the flax and other things that his produce exchanged for in the market. And so that season passed off, and all were contented.”

“ And what happened next season, sir ?”

“ Next season, twice the number of men came to ask work in the same plot of ground. Adam told them that he had very little more wages to pay away than he had the year before, so that if they all wanted to work under him they must be content with little more than half what each had formerly earned. They agreed, and submitted to be rather pinched ; but they hoped it would be only for a time, as it was a very fine harvest indeed, so much labour having been spent upon

it, and there being a fine profit into Adam's pocket."

"Did they wear pockets then, sir?"

"No doubt; for the women were improving their tailoring, as much as the men their garden-
ing, and expecting, like them, to increase their gains in consequence; and so they would have done, but that four times the number of labourers appeared next year, so that, notwithstanding the increase of capital, each had not so much as one-third the original wages; and the men grew very cross, and their wives very melancholy. But how could Adam help it?"

"Why did not the men carry their labour elsewhere?" asked Clack contemptuously.

"Why do you go on spinning for Mortimer and Rowe, when Elliott pays higher wages?"

"Because nobody is taking on new hands. I can't get work."

"Well, nobody was taking on new hands in Adam's neighbourhood; all the capital was already employed."

"But I don't mean to go on so," said Clack. "I shall strike with all the rest of Mortimer's men, if we don't get better paid."

"Aye, it is as I thought, Clack. Adam's head labourer was your grandfather, for he said just the same thing you are saying; and what is more, he did it. They all turned out, every man of them, and let the field take care of itself."

"And what happened?"

"Only half a harvest came up; so that, of course, wages were lower than ever next year. The

worst folly of all was that they went on to blame Adam, though he showed them that the harvest would not even pay its own expenses; much less leave anything to divide between him and them. 'You talk to me,' says he, 'as if I could get capital down from the clouds as fast as I please: whereas you might have seen from the beginning, that I have a certain quantity and no more. If you choose to bring a thousand labourers to live upon the capital which was once divided among a hundred, it is your fault and not mine that you are badly off.'"

"If the thousand men agreed to live for so little, it was their own affair, to be sure."

"And if they did not agree, their bidding against each other could not shift the blame upon Adam. If there was such competition among the men as to enable him to obtain more labour for the same wages, he was not to blame, was he, for employing three men for what he had at first paid to one?"

"Nor were the men to blame, sir, for bargaining for such wages as were to be had."

"Certainly. Where then was the evil?"

"Clearly in there being too many hands for the work to be done," replied Gibson. "But who could help that, sir?"

"Nobody could relieve the immediate pressure, Gibson, unless some had the means of taking themselves off, or of applying their labour to some employment which was less overstocked; but all had it in their power to prevent the evil returning. By foresight and care, labour may

be proportioned to capital as accurately as my machinery to the power of my steam-engine."

"What has all this to do with our petition?" asked the orator, who was impatient of remaining so long in the background.

"A great deal," replied Gibson. "Mr. Wentworth means to point out how much rests with the masters, and how much with the men, and to warn us against a strike. But, sir, about equalization of wages: you think that fair enough, I suppose. In the very same market, and under the very same circumstances, labour ought to be paid at the same rate, surely?"

"One circumstance, you know, is the extent of the master's capital, which is seldom the same in any two cases, and on which his power of waiting for his returns depends. But I agree with you that a man cannot safely lower his rate of wages much and permanently below that of his competitors, and that an equalization of wages is desirable for all parties; so I will sign my agreement to your wish for a public meeting. Coming, Charles, coming."

Gibson had observed Mr. Wentworth's old gray pony in the yard for some time, and he now saw that Charles looked tired of leading it backwards and forwards while the animal turned its head one way and another, as if looking for its usually punctual master. While helping the gentleman on with the heavy great-coat, which he wore winter and summer, the deputy apologized for having kept the rider and his steed so long asunder.

"Never mind," drawled Mr. Wentworth. "Dobbin and I have two rounds, a long, and a short; and I dare say he has made up his mind already which it will be to-day. If I have helped you to a short cut to your business, you will not think your time wasted any more than I." Then as he buttoned the last button, and pulled his hat over his brows, "That's well: all tight. Hey ho, Dobbin! Good day to ye all."

The shaggy pony pricked up his ears, quickened his pace, and well nigh nodded to his master at the sound of his voice. When Mr. Wentworth scrambled up into the saddle and left the yard at a funeral pace, the deputies looked with much more respect on him and his equipage, than on the brilliant spectacle they had met at Elliott's door.

CHAPTER IV.

UNION OF MEN.

As soon as it was ascertained that, though many of the masters declined committing themselves by signing their names, most or all of them would attend the desired meeting, Clack took upon himself to issue a placard, whose large red and black letters attracted the eyes of all who could read. It made known the intention of the

masters to meet at the York Hotel, on the Wednesday afternoon, and of the Committee of the men to hold a previous meeting at the Spread Eagle, in the morning, in order to prepare resolutions to be laid before the masters. The Committee was to be escorted to and fro by a circuitous route by a procession; and the place appointed where those were to meet who wished to make a part of the show, was St. George's Fields. The placard began and ended by an appeal to the people to guard their rights against oppression. Many were surprised at the anxiety of the leading men among the spinners to disown this placard. It seemed to the crowd very spirited and eloquent, and they began to look out their decorations for the procession.

Bray was one of the first on the spot, piping, drumming, and shaking his bells at the appearance of every new group. Other musicians joined the train, flags were displayed, the women gathered to look on, the children cheered and brought green boughs, and all had the appearance of rejoicing, though it would have been difficult for any one to say what there was to rejoice about. Many had no clear idea of what was doing or going to be done: some had no idea at all, and those who knew best thought it a pity that such a display should have been made as might bear the appearance of being intended to intimidate the masters. The Committee were so generally of this opinion, that they did not attend, but went quietly, one by one, to the Spread Eagle; so that, in fact, the procession

was formed to escort Clack, and nobody else. This was all the more glorious for him, he thought; and he walked proudly just behind the chief musician, Bray, now shaking hands from side to side, now bowing with his hand on his heart, now bidding all halt and giving the signal for groans or cheers. There were three groans at Mortimer and Rowe's, and three cheers at Elliott's, which were received with infinite disdain by that gentleman as he sat at his breakfast table, balancing his egg-spoon and glancing at the newspaper. The procession next overtook Mr. Wentworth in Chancery Lane, pacing to business on his gray pony. All eyes were turned to Clack for a signal whether to groan or cheer. There was, in the meanwhile, a faint beginning of each, at which the pony looked more astonished than his master, who only chuckled and murmured in his usual manner as he looked upon the assemblage with a quiet smile.

"What do you expect to get by this fine show?" said he to a youth near him.

"Cheap bread! Hurrah!" cried the lad waving his bludgeon, and wishing there was a loaf on the top of it.

"And you, and you, and you?" said Mr. Wentworth to one and another as they passed.

"No potato peelings! Reform and good wages! Liberty and cheap bread!" cried they, according to their various notions. The children's only idea was (and it was the wisest) that it was a holiday, with a procession and a band of music.

When Clack had got a little a-head of the slow-moving pony and its rider, he decided to halt and hold a short parley. Advancing with a bow, he said,

“ You call yourself the poor man’s friend, I believe, sir ? ”

“ No man’s enemy, I hope,” replied Mr. Wentworth.

“ Then allow us the honour of giving you three cheers on your pledge to support our interests this evening. Hats off ! ”

“ Better wait awhile,” said Mr. Wentworth. “ Cheers will keep, and I dislike unnecessary pledges.”

Clack looked suspicious, and nods and winks went round.

“ We might differ, you know, as to what your interests are, and then I might seem to break my word when I did not mean it.”

“ Let him go free,” said a bystander. “ He knows the consequences if he opposes us.”

“ That is rather a strange way of letting me go free,” observed the gentleman, smiling.

“ However, friend, threats are empty air to a man who knows his own mind ; and my mind is made up to consider the interests of all, come groans, come cheers.”

“ It is not everybody, sir, who would speak so independently,—to our faces too.”

“ True, friend. All the masters and all the men have not my years, and have not learned to look steadily in honest faces ; and that is why I am sorry to see this parade, which looks too much

like intimidation. Come now, be persuaded. I will give you house-room for your flags, and my old friend Bray there shall not lose his job ; he shall make it a holiday to the children in my factory."

It was too much to ask of Clack. He could not give up his procession, and so made haste to march on. As Mr. Wentworth turned in at his factory gate in Ancoats Street, every man in the long train bowed respectfully. In his case, the regard of his neighbours was not measured by the rate of wages he paid.

The procession, having deposited Clack at the Spread-Eagle, was by no means so ready to depart as to arrive. They insisted that it should be an open meeting, and that they should have a voice in the demands to be offered to the masters. They rushed through the house to the skittle-ground behind, caused a table with paper and ink to be placed in an arbour, and, setting the Committee entirely aside on the plea that this was a special occasion, began to call aloud for Allen to take the chair. Allen was nowhere to be found on the premises, for the good reason that he was at his work, and knew little of what was going on. Being sent for, he presently appeared and asked what he was wanted for.

"To take the chair."

But Allen was too modest to accept the honour at a word ; he drew back, and urged his being totally unused to come forward at public meetings, and named several who understood the management of that kind of business better than himself. Those that he named were all single

men; for he bore in mind,—and this certainly added to his reluctance,—that the sin of taking a prominent part in a combination of workmen, is apt to be remembered against the sinner when the days of trouble are over; and he felt that a family man was not the one who ought to be made to incur the risk.—When further pressed, he did not scruple to declare this to be one of his objections; but the people were in the humour to overcome objections, and they promised faithfully that he and his family should not be injured; that if discharged from the factory, they should be maintained by the Union; and that as no one knew so much of their affairs as Allen, as he could express himself with moderation in speech, and with ease on paper, he was the man to be at the head of their affairs, and that it was his bounden duty to accept the office.

Allen could not deny this, and did not, therefore, dally with his duty; but it cost him a bitter pang. While Clack listened and looked on with a feeling of jealousy, and thought it a moment of triumph such as he would fain have enjoyed himself, he little knew how little Allen was to be envied. He could not guess what feelings rushed on Allen's mind at the moment that he took the decisive step into the arbour and seated himself at the table, and received the pen into his hand. Thoughts of the dismay of his timid wife, of the hardships to which he might expose his children, of the difficulties of his office, and the ill-will which its discharge must sometimes bring upon him,—thoughts of the quarrels in which he

must mediate, and of the distress which, in case of a turn-out, he must witness, without much power to relieve,—might have overcome a man of firmer nerve than Allen; but though they distressed, they did not conquer him, convinced as he was that he ought not to evade the choice of the people. His fellow-labourers allowed him a few minutes to collect his thoughts before addressing them, and while he was seemingly arranging the papers before him, they packed themselves and one another closely, in order to leave room for new comers, without creating a noise and bustle. Those who stood nearest the arbour hung the flags so as to make a sort of canopy over it, and a few of the most efficient of the standing Committee took their places on each side of Allen.—His address was in natural accordance with the feelings which had just passed through his mind:—

“Combinations are necessary, my fellow-labourers, when one set of men is opposed to another, as we are to our masters. The law could not prevent combinations, even when severe punishments visited those who were engaged in them; which was a clear proof that men must combine, that the law was of no use, and ought therefore to be done away. Let me congratulate you that these severe laws are done away; that a man cannot now be shut up in prison for many months together for agreeing with his companions to withhold their labour in order to increase its price. Let me congratulate you that when a man cannot be caught in the

trap of the combination laws, he can no longer be punished under a law against conspiracy, which was made long before such a thing as combinations of workmen were thought of. We can now meet in the face of day, and conduct our bargains with our masters either by agreement or opposition, without any one having a right to interfere, as long as we keep the peace. Evils there are, indeed, still; and such a thing is still heard of as persecution in consequence of a combination; but such evils as are inflicted by the crushing hand of power light on a few, and the devotion of those few secures the exemption of the rest. It is certainly an evil to a peaceably disposed man to see himself regarded with a fierce eye by those to whom he no longer dares touch his hat lest he should be accused of suing for mercy. It is certainly an evil to a man of independent mind to be placed under the feet of any former enemy, to receive his weekly subsistence from the hands of his equals, and to fancy that the whisper is going round—‘This is he who lives upon our gathered pence.’—Such evils await, as you know, him who comes forward to lead a combination; but they belong to the state of affairs; and since they can neither be helped, nor be allowed to weigh against the advantages of union, they should be, not only patiently, but silently borne. Well is it for the victim if he can say to himself that now is the time for him to practise the heroism which in grander scenes has often made his bosom throb. He may even esteem himself honoured in his lot being some-

what of the same cast,—though his own consciousness alone may perceive the resemblance,—something of the same cast, I say, with that of venerated statesmen who have returned to the plough to be forgotten in their own age, and remembered in another,—with that of generals who have held out the decrepit hand with a petition to the gay passers by to give a halfpenny to the deliverer of their country.—Nay, no cheers yet! Your cheers only recall me with shame to that which I was going to say when my personal feelings led me away,—led me to compare that which is universally allowed to be moving because it is noble, with that which, if moving at all, is so only because it is piteous. As I was saying, combinations are ordered by laws more powerful than those which, till lately, forbade them; and this shows the wisdom of the repeal of the latter. If it had been wished to prevent our meeting for caprice or sport, laws might have availed. If their object had been to hinder the idle from meeting to dissipate their tediousness, or the gamesome from pursuing that on which no more valuable thing was staked than their present pleasure, these laws might have been successfully, though somewhat tyrannically, enforced. But such are not they who form combinations: but rather such as have their frames bowed with over-toil, and their brows knit with care, such as meet because the lives and health of their families, their personal respectability, and the bare honesty of not stealing a loaf from another man's counter, are the tremendous stake

which they feel to be put to hazard. Sound and wise laws can restrain the fiercest passions of the few, because, being sound and wise, they are supported by the many; and it is therefore clear that when laws give way like cobwebs before the impulse of a body of men too united to be brought together by caprice, those laws are neither wise nor sound. Such were the combination laws, and therefore were they repealed. Never again will it be attempted to set up the prohibition of parliament against the commands of nature,—a threat of imprisonment against the cravings of hunger. Security of person and property being provided for, (as, indeed, they were already by former laws,) we are left free to make the best agreement we can for the sale of our labour, and to arrange our terms by whatever peaceable methods we choose.

“Combination on our part is necessary from power being lodged unequally in the hands of individuals, and it is necessary for labourers to husband their strength by union, if it is ever to be balanced against the influence and wealth of capitalists. A master can do as he pleases with his hundred or five hundred workmen, unless they are combined. One word of his mouth, one stroke of his pen, can send them home on the Saturday night with a blank prospect of destitution before them; while these hundred or five hundred men must make their many wills into one before his can even be threatened with opposition. One may tremble, another may mourn, a third may utter deep down in his heart the

curse he dares not proclaim ; but all this is of no avail. The only way is to bring opposition to bear upon the interests of the master ; and this can only be done by union. The best of the masters say, and probably with truth, that their interests demand the reductions under which we groan. Be it so : we have interests too, and we must bring them up as an opposing force, and see which are the strongest. This may be,—allow me to say, must be—done without ill-will in any party towards any other party. There may be some method yet unknown by which the interests of all may be reconciled ; if so, by union we must discover it. But if, indeed, interests must continue to be opposed, if bread must be fought for, and the discord of men must for ever be contrasted with the harmony of nature, let the battle be as fair as circumstances will allow. Let the host of pigmies try if they cannot win a chance against the regiment of giants by organizing their numbers, and knitting them into a phalanx. The odds against them are fearful, it is true ; but more desperate battles have been sustained and won. I have not indeed, as the friend at my elbow reminds me, represented our case so favourably as I might have done. Many here think that the power is in our own hands ; some that the chances are equal, and the least sanguine, that the chance is fair.—I have spoken of the general necessity of union, and not with any intention of taking for granted that we are on the eve of an express struggle. This depends on circumstances yet to be disclosed. Some

change, and that a speedy one, there ought to be in the condition of the working classes: they cannot go on long labouring their lives away for a less recompense than good habitations, clothing, and food. These form the very least sum of the just rewards of industry; whereas a multitude are pinched with the frosts of winter, live amidst the stench of unwholesome dwellings in summer, have nearly forgotten the taste of animal food, and even sigh for bread as for a luxury. The question to be debated, and to be put to the trial if necessary,—and I wish every master in Manchester was here to take down my words for his further consideration, is whether a social being has not a right to comfortable subsistence in return for his full and efficient labour.” —Allen’s pause was interrupted by a voice from behind the crowd, declaring,—

“No doubt, no doubt, my good fellows: a clear right, and I wish with all my heart you may win your right.”

It was Rowe, who had entered as if for the purpose of convincing the men that he was on their side. An opening was made from the table to the outskirts of the crowd; but Rowe slunk back in opposition to all attempts to push him forward. The fact was, he saw another person present whom he little expected to meet, and before whom he was sorry to have committed himself. Mr. Wentworth advanced through the opening, with his memorandum book in his hand:—

“I am willing to put down your question,

Allen, for further discussion, provided you add a clause to it:—‘ Whether a member of society has not a right to a comfortable subsistence in return for full and efficient labour, *provided he does not, by his own act, put that subsistence beyond his reach?*’”

Allen smiled, and all within hearing stared at Mr. Wentworth’s simplicity in adding this clause which nobody could dispute.

“ We have certainly nothing to object to your addition, sir,” said Allen. “ Only I cannot think it necessary.”

“ Let it stand, however, for my satisfaction ; and now go on with what you have to say.”

A seat was offered to Mr. Wentworth, and proclamation was made of one for Mr. Rowe, who, however, had disappeared. Allen proceeded:—

“ I have only a few words to add respecting the terms on which I will consent to resume my present office on any future occasion, or to accept of any power you may wish to put into my hands. I must be supported by you in all measures taken to preserve our own peace and that of the masters ; and to this end, there must be the utmost strictness in the full performance of all contracts. Whether the present dispute be amicably settled this very evening, or whether it be protracted, or a partial or a general strike should take place,—none of these things can set aside a contract previously entered into. Integrity must be our rule as much as liberty is our warrant and justice our end. The first man who deserts the work he

has pledged himself to perform, puts the weapon of the law into the hands of our opponents ; the first who is legally convicted of a breach of contract, brands our cause with indelible disgrace. We want no truants here, and we will own none but honest labourers to be of our company ; and unless I am aided in preserving the reputation of our cause, I declare,—whatever may be thought of the importance of the threat,—that from that moment I withdraw my countenance and my help. If at the period of any strike, any part of my contract with my employers is undischarged, I shall hold it to be my duty to work for them during the stated number of hours, even if I should repair from their factory to preside over a meeting like the present ; and the same is expected of every man who enrolls himself in our bands. Honour towards our masters is as necessary as fidelity to each other."

The meeting having signified an unanimous assent to what Allen had said, he proceeded to draw up a statement of wages to be presented to the masters. A great number of men pushed and jostled one another in order to get near the table and state their grievances ; for some under every firm supposed their wages to be the lowest. It was found to be as the deputies had stated, that Mortimer and Rowe paid the lowest wages, and Elliott the highest.—Mortimer and Rowe were therefore to be requested to answer this evening, yes or no, whether they would give Elliott's rate of wages. Allen, Clack, and

Gibson were deputed to wait on the masters with the written demand.

The meeting broke up for a while, and the quietest and most industrious of the men went home, while the rest prepared to parade again through the streets.

Allen withdrew one of the last, as he wished to see the place quiet before he left his post. As he turned from the door of the public-house, his hands in his pockets and his eyes bent on the ground in deep thought, he was startled by some one taking his arm. It was his wife, who had been watching and lingering in the neighbourhood till she was tired and frightened.

"Why, Mary," said her husband, smiling, "you will make me lose my good name. This is the way wives haunt the public-house when their husbands are given to drink."

Mary could trust her husband for soberness if ever woman could; but she feared his being drawn in to join against the masters, and bring ruin on his family.

Allen answered that he was not the man to be *drawn in* to do what his wife knew he disliked as much as she could do; but he might of his own free choice determine to do what she feared; and, in that case, he trusted the discharge of his public duty would not be embittered by domestic opposition and discontent. His prospect was not a very cheering one, however, in this respect. When fairly seated in his own home, his wife seemed prodigiously inclined to lock the door

and pocket the key; and she cried so piteously at the bare idea of a strike and its distresses, that Allen longed to go to sleep, and forget all that had been done, and all that was in prospect.

CHAPTER V.

NO PROGRESS MADE.

THE masters' meeting was a tedious affair to all parties. The chairman and the three deputies held such long disputes, as to whether wages were really much lower than formerly, that the people who waited in anxious expectation at the Spread-Eagle, began to wonder whether the deputies had lain down to take a nap, or found their business a different kind of affair from what they had expected. If they had known what point was in dispute, they would have wondered what room there was for argument, as any man among them could have told what he was paid two years before, and what now. They all knew that they were now paid by Mortimer and Rowe, only three and fourpence per one thousand hanks, while some time before, they had had upwards of four shillings. How, they would have asked, could there be any doubt as to whether wages were lowered?

Clack was profuse in his expressions of astonishment at the stupidity of those who made

a question of so plain a matter; but his wonder did no more towards settling the point than the shuffling of the chairman, who did not understand the true state of the case, and could therefore render no service in throwing light upon it.

If it had not been for Mr. Wentworth, and one or two more who held his views, nothing at all would have been done.

"Nobody doubts," observed Wentworth, "that you now take so many shillings less than you took five years ago; but that matters nothing to you or to us."

The chairman and Clack stared in about an equal degree.

"My dear sir, that is the very point," said the one.

"I always thought you had had a heart to feel for the poor," cried the other.

"I beg your pardon," said the gentleman quietly, "it is not, sir, the point in dispute, and I trust, Clack, my observation does not carry any great cruelty in it. If a penny a week would enable a man to buy all necessaries for himself and his family, and if a pound would do no more, would it signify to any man whether his wages were a penny or a pound?"

"Certainly not; but who ever heard of such wonderful pennies?"

"I have heard of shillings which you might think nearly as wonderful as such pennies: shillings which would buy more than twice as much at one time as at another."

"To be sure," said Clack, laughing con-

temptuously, "every child knows that the price of bread and other things rises and falls."

"Very well. Your concern is about how much of bread and other things you get in return for your labour, and not how many shillings. Shillings are of no value to you but for what they buy. If half the money in the kingdom were to be carried off by fairies this night, so that you could have only half your present nominal wages, you would be no worse off than at present. The same quantity of food and clothing would be in the market, and you would get as much for sixpence as you now get for a shilling. This is why I said the nominal amount of your wages mattered little. I said nothing about the real amount."

"But you do not deny, sir," said Allen, "that our real wages are less than they were?"

"I am afraid it is as true as that our profits are less. There is less surplus remaining over our manufacture for us to divide. If this division were made in kind, instead of your being paid in money in advance, you would see the real state of the case,—that we cannot afford higher wages."

"In kind! Lord, sir," cried Clack, "what should we do with a bundle of yarns on a Saturday night? what baker or grocer would take them?"

"None, I dare say; and therefore, for the convenience of the parties, payment for labour is made in money; but it is not the less true that your wages consist of the proportion you receive

of the return brought by the article you manufacture. You know how the value of this return varies; how, when an article is scarce, it brings in a large return, and how, when it is plentiful, our customers give less for it; and you must therefore see how your wages vary independently of our will."

"But whose doing is it, sir, that the return varies so much?"

"It is partly your doing; I mean that of those who bring labour to market. We masters have nothing to do with the quantity of labour brought to sale any further than to purchase it. If you bring so much as to reduce its price too far, whose fault is that?"

"To be sure we cannot expect you to pay high, when you can purchase labour cheap," said Allen, "any more than we would give sixpence for a loaf, if we could get as good a one for fivepence."

"If," observed one of the masters, "you brought only half the present quantity of labour to us, we must, whether we liked it or no, pay double for it. If you choose to bring up large families who will in turn rear large families to the same occupation, it is a necessary consequence that wages will fall to the very lowest point."

"What do you call the lowest point?"

"That at which the labourer can barely subsist. If he cannot subsist, he cannot labour, of course. If he can do more than merely subsist, his wages are not at the lowest point."

"Ours are so now," said Gibson, despondingly.

"Not exactly so," replied the manufacturer. "Don't fancy that I wish them lower, or would not make them higher if I could; but I cannot allow that they are at the lowest. Do you know no Irish hand-loom weavers who make only four shillings a week?"

"Poor creatures! yes; but how do they live? Crowded together on straw; with mere rags to cover them, and only half as much food as they could eat. It is dreadful!"

"It is; and God forbid we should see many more sinking down into such a state! I only mentioned their case to show you that your wages may still fall, if the labourers' proportion of the returns to capital is still further divided among a number. Upon the proportion of your labour to our capital depends the rise and fall of wages through the whole scale of payment."

"What would you call the highest rate?" inquired Allen.

"The greatest possible proportion of the return that the capitalist can spare, so as to leave it worth his while to manufacture; and this highest rate is, of course, paid only when labour is difficult to be had."

"We cannot wait till that time," said Clack. "If we waited till a war or a fever carried off part of our numbers, it would do little good; for there are plenty of young ones growing up. We must bestir ourselves and see if a strike will not do as well. The plague would no doubt be more

acceptable to gentlemen, as long as it did not stop their manufacture, like a strike; but the poor must raise themselves by such means as are in their own hands, and not wait for a judgment of Providence."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Wentworth. "Providence would have men guide themselves by its usual course, and not by uncommon accidents. But I doubt whether a strike is one of the means which will gain your point. It will leave your case worse than in the beginning, depend upon it. A strike works the wrong way for your interest. It does not decrease your numbers, and it does decrease the capital which is to maintain you."

Clack would hear nothing against a strike. Let the masters all give the same wages as Elliott, or prepare for a strike. Rather to silence the orator than with hope of much benefit from the observation, Gibson said that a pernicious multiplication of hands took place from the big piecers being allowed to spin. The masters for the most part liked that they should, because they soon got to employ them to spin at less wages; and too many of the men liked it, also, because it saved them trouble: and some would even sit down to read, while their piecers were looking after the wheels; but it seemed to him very hard that good spinners should be sometimes out of work, while piecers were practising their business.

The masters thought that any regulation of the kind Gibson wished for, would only have a slight effect for a short time; it could not permanently

keep down the spinning population to the number required to ensure sufficient wages.

Clack would not be diverted any longer from the plain answer to his plain question, would Messrs. Mortimer and Rowe raise their wages to Elliott's rate? Rowe took a long pinch of snuff to avoid answering. Mortimer sat bolt upright with his arms folded, and replied, "Certainly not." Not a word more could be got out of him. Others of the masters tried to mediate, proposing that Elliott and Mortimer should meet half-way, that is, at Mr. Wentworth's rate: but this proposal was rejected by all parties. Elliott said he left these things to the people under him; but he believed his clerk was popular with the operatives and wished for no change any more than himself; so that he should not reduce. Mortimer would not be dictated to by a mob; and the representatives of this 'mob' declared their intention of calling Wentworth to account, when they had done with Mortimer, and that his rate must not therefore be proposed for adoption. And thus the matter was no nearer being settled than before.

"Pray is it true," inquired Mortimer, "that you have talked of rooting me out?"

"Such a thing has been mentioned in private, sir," replied Allen, "but immediately scouted. It was never proposed at any public meeting, and will not be mentioned again I dare say."

"So! you have more prudence than I gave you credit for. I almost wish you had made the trial, that you might end by learning your own

place. You would soon have known what comes of dictating to us."

This was a signal for Clack to renew his oratory. The peace-makers on both sides found it was time to separate, as there seemed no chance of coming to any agreement. The three men made their bow and withdrew,—Allen with a heavy heart, leaving the masters to agree that the affair must be gone through with firmness and temper; that is, some were for firmness, and some for temper. Mortimer was annoyed at being exposed to annoyance from people so much beneath him; and Wentworth and others thought that the shortest way to a good issue was to regard the claims of the people with respect, their mistakes with gentleness, and their distresses with compassion.

Before Allen could speak a word in reply to the inquiries of his eager companions, Clack began in a strain of indignation to pronounce him a trimmer, for having answered Mortimer as he did about the proposal to root him out. The men being disposed at the moment to listen to everything that regarded the punishment of Mortimer, were hard upon Allen, though not so abusive as Clack. Allen kept his temper, stood the brunt of that to which his rectitude of principle exposed him, stayed till the business of the evening was finished, and then pondered, on his way home, the hard chance by which he was exposed to the displeasure of the masters, the unreasonableness of his comrades, and the timid complaints of his wife. Allen was not made
ambition.

Before the operatives separated, it was agreed that all employed at a lower rate of wages than Elliott's should turn out the next morning, except the children, whose maintenance would cost so much that it was desirable they should earn as long as allowed to do so. Meetings were to be held from day to day, first to appoint a fresh committee, and afterwards to take measures for securing assistance from fellow-labourers at a distance.

Bray, who had taken care that the meeting should not want for harmony of one kind at least during its sitting, betook himself at its close to the York Hotel, just when the masters were dispersing, and with some degree of impudence stated his desire to be impartial, and his readiness to drum the gentlemen home, if they would please to marshal themselves, as he had played in front of the men in the morning. Elliott called for a waiter to turn the fellow away, and Wentworth observed that he feared his travels had not improved the quality of his wit.

CHAPTER VI.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

"How is Martha?" was Allen's first inquiry on meeting his wife at the head of the stairs. Martha had been asleep when he had returned in

the middle of the day ; for it was now her turn for night-work at the factory, and what rest she had must be taken in the day. Her mother said that her lameness was much the same ; that she had seen Mr. Dawson, the apothecary, who pronounced that rest was what her weak limbs most required ; and that as perfect rest was out of the question, her mother must bandage the joints while the child was at her work, and keep her laid on her bed at home. Here was the difficulty, her mother said, especially while Hannah was with her, for they were both fond of play when poor Martha was not too tired to stir. She was now gone to her work for the night.

The little girl repaired to the factory, sighing at the thought of the long hours that must pass before she could sit down or breathe the fresh air again. She had been as willing a child at her work as could be till lately : but since she had grown sickly, a sense of hardship had come over her, and she was seldom happy. She was very industrious, and disposed to be silent at her occupation ; so that she was liked by her employers, and had nothing more to complain of than the necessary fatigue and disagreeableness of the work. She would not have minded it for a few hours of the day ; but to be shut up all day, or else all night, without any time to nurse the baby or play with her companions, was too much for a little girl of eight years old. She had never been so sensible of this as since her renewed acquaintance with Hannah. This night, when the dust from the cotton made

her cough, when the smell and the heat brought on sickness and faintness, and the incessant whizzing and whirling of the wheels gave her the feeling of being in a dream, she remembered that a part of Hannah's business was to walk on broad roads or through green fields by her father's side, listening to the stories he amused her with, and to sit on a stile or under a tree to practice a new tune, or get a better dinner than poor Martha often saw. She forgot that Hannah was sometimes wet through, or scorched by the sun, as her complexion, brown as a gipsy's, showed; and that Hannah had no home and no mother, and very hard and unpleasant work to do at fairs, and on particular occasions. About midnight, when Martha remembered that all at home were probably sound asleep, she could not resist the temptation of resting her aching limbs, and sat down, trusting to make up afterwards for lost time, and taking care to be on her feet when the overlooker passed, or when any one else was likely to watch her. It is a dangerous thing, however, to take rest with the intention of rousing oneself from time to time; and so Martha found. She fairly fell asleep after a time, and dreamed that she was attending very diligently to her work; and so many things besides passed through her mind during the two minutes that she slept, that when the overlooker laid his hand upon her shoulder, she started and was afraid she was going to be scolded for a long fit of idleness. But she was not harshly spoken to.

“Come, come, child; how long have you been asleep?”

“I don’t know. I thought I was awake all the time.” And Martha began to cry.

“Well, don’t cry. I was past just now, and you were busy enough; but don’t sit down; better not, for fear you should drop asleep again.”

Martha thought she had escaped very well; and winking and rubbing her eyes, she began to limp forward and use her trembling hands. The overlooker watched her for a few moments, and told her she was so industrious in general that he should be sorry to be hard upon her; but she knew that if she was seen flagging over her work, the idle ones would make it an excuse to do so too. Martha curtsied, and put new vigour into her work at this praise. Before he went on in his rounds, the overlooker pointed to the window and told her morning was come.

It was a strange scene that the dawn shone upon. As the grey light from the east mingled with the flickering, yellow glare of the lamps, it gave a mottled dirty appearance to everything; to the pale-faced children, to the unshaved overlooker, to the loaded atmosphere, and even to the produce the of wheels.

When a bright sunbeam shone in through the window, thickened with the condensed breath of the work-people, and showed the oily steam rising through the heated room, the lamps were extinguished, to the great relief of those who found the place growing too like an oven to be much longer tolerable. The sunbeams rested now on

the ceiling, and Martha knew that they must travel down to the floor and be turned full on her frame and some way past it, before she could be released ; but still it was a comfort that morning was come.

She observed that the overlooker frequently went out and came back again, and that there was a great deal of consultation among her betters as the hours drew on. A breath of fresh air came in now and then from below, and news went round that the gates were already open, two hours earlier than usual. Presently the tramp of heavy feet was heard, like that of the weavers and spinners coming to their daily work. Martha looked up eagerly to the clock, supposing that the time had passed quicker than she had been aware of ; but it was only four o'clock. What could bring the people to their work so early ? They could scarcely have mistaken the hour from the brightness of the morning, for it had now clouded over, and was raining a soaking shower. More news went round. Those who had arrived had barely escaped being waylaid and punished for coming to work after a strike had been proclaimed. They had been pursued to the gates and very nearly caught, and must now stay where they were till nightfall, as they could not safely appear in broad daylight, going to and returning from their dinners. Many wondered that they had ventured at all, and all prophesied that they must give up to the will of the Union if they wished to be safe. The overlooker, finding much excitement prevailing on the

circulation of the news, commanded silence, observing that it was no concern of any of the children present. There was no strike of the children, and they would be permitted to go and come without hinderance. Martha determined to get away the first moment she could, and to meet her father, if possible, that he might not encounter any troublesome people for her sake.

Allen was watching the moment of release as anxiously for his little daughter as she could have done for herself, and he was to the full as weary as she. On the previous evening he had carried home paper and pens, preferring to write the necessary letters at his own dwelling to spending the night at the Spread-Eagle. He got his wife to clear and wipe down the deal table, when she had put all the children to bed; and then he sat down to compose a pattern letter, stating the circumstances which had led to a strike, and urging an appeal to their fellow-workmen in distant places for aid in the struggle which might be deemed a peculiarly important one. Having tolerably well satisfied himself that the letter was the proper thing, he read it to his admiring wife, who by turns smiled because she was proud of her husband, and sighed to think how perilous an office he had undertaken. She then went to bed and was soothed to sleep by the scratching of his nicely-mended pen. From this time all was silence in the apartment, except the occasional crackle when Allen folded his paper, or the cautious taking up and laying down of the snuffers when the long candle-wick

craved snuffing, or the passing squalls of the baby, who, however, allowed himself to be so quickly hushed as not materially to disturb the scribe.

When nearly twenty copies of his letter had been written, each varying a little from the original, according to the differing circumstances of those to whom it was addressed, Allen was so weary that he could write no longer without some refreshment. He put out his light, and opened the window for a minute to breathe the fresh air. The pattering of the rain wakened his wife, who roused herself to fret over the weather and wonder how Martha was to get home. Her husband told her he meant to go for the child, and would carry a shawl to wrap her up in. If Mary had known what lions were in her husband's path, she would not have let him go.

There was but one man visible when Allen went forth, and he was walking rapidly at some distance. It was Hare,—who, having never been well disposed towards a turn-out, and being supported in his dislike of it by his wife, hoped to avoid mischief and continue his earnings by going to the factory before people should be looking for him, and doing his work as usual, without talking about wages to anybody. Such devices did not suit the purposes of the Union, and were guarded against, as in all similar cases. Hare thought it just possible that he might meet with opposition, and looked as far before him as his eyes could reach; but he did not suspect an ambush on either hand. When he continued in

the same direction, however, so as to render it certain that he was making for the factory, six men issued, one by one, from opposite alleys, and formed a line across the street. Hare's name was shouted to some one still concealed, coupled with a question whether he was under contract.

Having received their answer, they coolly told their trembling fellow-workman that as he had not the pretence of any contract, and was nevertheless going to work at an unfair price, he must be ducked. They had a rope ready, and would deliver him up to be dragged through the river.

Hare turned from one to another with as large a variety of excuses as he could invent at the moment. Among the rest, he vowed that he came to watch who would be wicked enough to go to work at this same factory after having sworn to strike. He was laughed at, let off with a roll in the kennel and with being hunted part of the way home, whither he ran to seek refuge with his wife in panting terror, and presenting a woeful spectacle of disgrace. He perhaps owed it to his known cowardice that he fared no worse; as his companions were well assured he was sufficiently daunted not to attempt to cheat them a second time.

Allen proceeded at his best pace while this judgment was being inflicted on Hare, never supposing that he could be suspected of taking work unfairly; but, like all eminent men, he had his enemies, and these chose to take for granted that he could not be going to the factory with any honest design. He was seized, girded with

the dreadful rope, and hauled towards the river, though he produced the shawl, demanded time to call witnesses, and used all the eloquence he could command. His last resource was to explain that the supplies from a distance must be delayed if any harm happened to him. This occasioned a short pause, during which the night-children came forth from the factory. One of the ambush, who had some sense of justice, and wished to find out the truth about Allen, ran up to Martha, as soon as she appeared, and before she could know what had happened, and asked her whether her father was not late in coming to work this morning?

“He is not coming to work at all,” said the child; “but he said he would come for me. Perhaps the rain made him stay at home.”

This testimony released Allen, and disappointed some of the lads who stood round of a frolic, which they had desired to fill up the time till they could proceed to a frolic of a different kind. They looked up at the clouds, and hoped the rain would not make the parson cheat them. They were going to be married. Several had begun to think of this some time before (as lads and lasses that work together in factories are wont to do); and this seemed the very time, when they had a holiday they did not know what to do with, and were sure, they believed, of ten shillings a week as long as the turn-out should last. So, amid the warning looks of elderly friends, and the remonstrances of parents who justly thought this the worst possible time to

take new burdens upon them, several thoughtless young couples went laughing through the rain to the altar, and snapped their fingers at the clergyman behind his back because his careful enquiries brought to light no cause why the solemnization of matrimony should not proceed.

CHAPTER VII.

A COMMITTEE.

THIS was an eventful day. The masters published a placard, (not, however, signed by all,) threatening to turn off every man in their employ who should continue, after a certain day, to belong to the Union. The effect was exactly what the wisest of them expected; the turn-out became general; and the workmen, being exasperated, put new vigour into all their proceedings. Their Committee was enlarged and instructed to sit daily. Delegates were despatched on tours to distant places, with authority to tell the tale, and collect supplies; and the people at home consented to receive, for their weekly maintenance, no more than half what the young bridegrooms had settled as the probable allowance. Five shillings a week was to be allowed as long as the children remained at work; and in case of their employment failing, the sum was to be in-

creased in proportion to the capability of the fund. Weekly meetings were ordered to be held in St. George's Fields, at which any one should be welcome to attend; and it was agreed that it would be worth while going to some expense to have the proceedings of the body made public through the newspapers.

Allen was strongly in favour of having only three members of the Committee sit daily for the dispatch of common business; viz., the treasurer, secretary, and one of the other members, in rotation, for the sake of a casting vote. He knew enough of such Committees to believe that ill-natured tittle-tattle was particularly apt to find its way into them, and that quarrels between masters and men were often kept up by these means long after they would naturally have died out; and that a weekly sitting, at which the three members should be accountable for all they had done, would be sufficient for the interests of the association. The proposal gave offence, however; some supposing that he wanted to keep the power in few hands, others being unwilling to enjoy the pomp and privilege of their office no oftener than once or twice a week, and some honestly thinking that the voices of all were wanted for the decision of questions daily arising. Allen would have cared little for his motion being rejected; but, in spite of all the allowance he strove to make, it vexed him to the heart to hear evil motives assigned for every proposition which did not please the people. He often said to himself that it must be a very dif-

ferent thing to sit in a committee of gentlemen where opinions are treated as opinions, (i. e., as having no moral qualities, and to be accepted or rejected according to their expediency,) and in a committee of persons who expose their deficiencies of education by calling all unkind or foolish who differ from themselves. Such remarks appeared to Allen to proceed from the same spirit which tortured martyrs in former days, and proscribed the leaders of a combination in the present.

Any one committee-meeting afforded a pretty fair specimen of all. Sometimes there were more letters than at others, sometimes larger, sometimes smaller remittances than had been expected, and occasionally none at all. Sometimes there was a dearth of gossip about the sayings and doings of the masters, and then again an abundance of news of spiteful devices and wilful misrepresentations and scornful sayings, for which there should be a sure retribution. But the same features distinguished all; and one sketch will therefore describe the whole.

A little before ten, the committee-men might be seen tending towards St. George's road. They could win their way but slowly, for they were continually waylaid by one or another who had some very important suggestion to make, or question to answer; or a piece of news to tell which would sound well in committee. Allen was the most sore beset.

"Lord! Allen, what work yours must be with such a many letters to write! Why, it must cost a mint of money to pay postage."

"All for the cause, you know. Let me go, will you? I am rather late."

"Not a clock has struck yet, man, and I want to know whether it's true about the large order that's gone to Glasgow because Elliott can't execute it?"

"All true, perfectly true. Good bye."

"Well, but have you seen Elliott since? Lord! I should love to see him look chap-fallen when he finds the power is with us."

"'Tis for us to look chap-fallen, I think," said Allen, trying to disengage his button; "where's the power if more such orders go the same way?"

"Stop, Allen, one thing more. Do you know, several of us are of a mind that it is a disgrace to the Union that Wooller, with his large family, has no more on a pay-day than Briggs."

"Briggs has a sick wife, and his children are too young to work."

"Wooller must have more, however, and that you'll find to your cost, if you don't take care. Pretty encouragement to turn out, indeed, if such a man as he is to be sacrificed to worse men than himself!"

"Let him carry his complaint to the proper place, if he is discontented. The committee ordered his allowance, and it is they must alter it, not I."

Allen now thought he had made his escape; but his gossip called after him that he had something to tell him on which the whole fate of the strike depended. Allen was all ear in a moment. It was said, and on very good authority, that the

masters would never employ a Manchester man again. They had sent to Glasgow and to Belfast, and all over England, and if they could not get workmen enough by these means, they would bring them in troops from abroad.

"Who told you this?" said Allen, laughing.

"That's between him and me," replied the gossip mysteriously; "but you may rely upon it, it is true."

"Aye, we have been told so twice a day since we turned out," said Allen; "but that is no reason why we should believe it. You might as well tell me they mean to take their mills on their backs and march over the sea to America."

"You may laugh, sir, but I'm far from as sure as you that we are not going to ruin."

"I am sure of no such thing," replied Allen. "I wish I were; but if we are ruined, it will not be by French people spinning in Chorlton Row."

A knot of smokers, each with as much to say, stood or lolled about the door of the Spread-Eagle. Allen looked at the window of the committee-room, and wished he could have got in that way; but there was no escape from the file of questioners. Several of his companions were ready to tell him that he was late, when he at length took his seat at the end of the table, and began to arrange his papers.

"I know it; but I left home half an hour since. I have been stopped by the way."

"And so you always will be. You're so soft, man, you're not fit for office if you can't say 'no.'"

Dooley, the representative of the Irish handloom weavers, here took up Allen's defence, urging that it would be too hard if the people out of office might not make their remarks to those who were in; and that a secretary must be as stony-hearted as the last speaker to refuse them a hearing.

"Come, come; to business," cried Allen, to stop the dispute. "But first shut the door, Brown, and make every one knock that wants to come in. If they won't obey at once, slip the bolt. We must preserve the dignity and quiet of the Committee."

"O, by all manner of means," said the Irishman, sitting down demurely at the board, and twirling his thumbs; "it puts me in mind of the way his honour set us to play when we were children——"

"I have here a letter from number three," Allen began, as if all had been silence, "who has prosecuted his journey successfully as far as Halifax, from whence he hopes to transmit, in a post or two, a sum nearly as large as was contributed by that place to the Bradford strike. It will gratify you, I am sure, to know with how much friendly anxiety our fellow-labourers watch the result of our present noble struggle; and I trust you will agree with me that their suggestions are entitled to our respectful attention. Dooley, be so good as read the letter to the Committee, while I look what must be brought forward next."

"With raal pleasure, Mr. Secretary; but first

I'll take lave to wet my throat with a little ale or spirits. It's dry work reading and advising, and a clear sin to keep so many men shut up on a summer's day with not a drop to help their wits."

"Whatever is ordered is at your own cost, remember," said Allen; "and I would recommend your going elsewhere to refresh yourself. Meanwhile, will some one else have the goodness to read the letter now under consideration?"

After much complaint and discussion, Dooley was prevailed on to be quiet and let the business go forward. Having first loaded Allen with abuse and then with praise, he tried to behave well, much in the same way as if his priest had put him under penance.

The letter in question and some others having been discussed and dismissed with due decorum, a member brought before the notice of his fellow-workmen a calumny which he believed had been widely circulated, and which was likely to impair the credit of the association, and thus to deprive them of the countenance of their distant friends and of all chance of reconciliation with the masters. It was said and believed——

A push at the door. "Who is there?"

"Only Tom Hammond."

"Learn what he wants."

Tom Hammond only thought he would look in and see whether it was a full committee-day, and how they got on: which thought only occasioned the door to be shut in his face and the delivery of an admonition to go about his own

business and leave other people to manage theirs in quiet.

“ Well ; what was this libel ? ”

It was said that the Committee had taken upon themselves to go round as inspectors, and to examine the work done by all members of the Union, and determine whether the price given for it was fair or not. Allen thought it incredible that any of the masters could have given heed to so absurd a report ; but if one instance could be brought of its having been actually believed, he would be the first to propose some measure of effectual contradiction.

Clack would wish that the secretary was somewhat less inclined to make light of the information brought to the committee by some who were as likely to know what was going forward as himself. The association was not to lose its character because its secretary chose to laugh at the foul calumnies circulated against it, and which seemed anything but laughable to those who had the honour of the Union really at heart. And so forth.

The secretary begged to explain that nothing was further from his intention than to risk the good name of the association ; and he must further assert that no man breathing had its honour more at heart than himself. He need but appeal to those who had heard him say but just now——And so forth.

The result was a resolution that a paper should be drawn up and presented to the masters, containing an explanation of what the office of this

committee consisted in; viz.:—not in determining the value of work and the rate of wages, but in managing the affairs of the turn-out after the strike had been actually made; in collecting and distributing money, and conducting the correspondence and accounts.

While Allen was consulting his companions about the wording of this letter, the rub-a-dub of a drum, accompanying shrill piping, was heard approaching from a distance, and presently the sounds of merriment from without told that Bray was among the smokers on the outside. Sometimes a rumble and screech seemed to show that the unskilful were trying his instruments, and then it appeared from the heavy tread and shuffling of feet that some were dancing horn-pipes under his instructions. Dooley soon started up.

“Let us have Bray in here. He’ll put a little life in us, for all this is as dull as sitting at a loom all day. We make it a point of honour, you know, not to trample on a fallen man. We let Bray come and go as if he was still one of us, poor cratur.”

“Wait till he comes,” said Allen. “He is thinking no more of us at this moment than we need think of him.”

Dooley returned to his seat with the mock face of a chidden child, and walking as softly as if he trod on eggs, twirling his thumbs as before. He had not long to wait for his diversion. Bray suddenly made a lodgment in the window, sitting astride on the sill with his drum balanced

before him and playing with all his might, so as almost to deafen those within. When he saw the vexed countenances of two or three of the men of business, he ceased, dropped into the room, rolled his drum into a corner, flung his belled cap behind it, and said,—

“ Don’t scold me, pray. I’ll make it all up to you. I’ll have bars put up at the windows at my own cost to prevent any more idle fellows dropping in upon you when you have made all safe at the door. Moreover, I will give you the benefit of my best wisdom at this present time. What’s the matter in hand ? ”

The Committee found their advantage in the consideration which made them admit Bray to their councils, though he had no longer any connexion with their affairs. His natural shrewdness and travelled wisdom were valuable helps upon occasion. When the terms of the disclaimer were agreed upon, Bray told them he had something of importance to say, and he should say it out as plainly as he had heard it, since he hoped they were all men, all possessed of resolution enough to bear what might be said of them, and to surrender their own gratification for the public good.

Clack was the first to give a vehement assent. With his hand on his heart, he protested that he would take his heart in his hand and give it to be toasted at the hangman’s fire, if it would do the cause any good. All with different degrees of warmth declared their readiness to sacrifice or to be sacrificed. Allen’s assent was given the

last and the least confidently, though without hesitation. He had inwardly flinched on first hearing Bray's portentous words, but the recollection that he had already devoted himself, restored his firmness and prepared him for whatever might be coming. He would have flinched no more, even had Bray's story concerned himself instead of another.

"I have been a pretty long round this morning," said Bray, "and among other places to Middleton, and there some good fellows and I had a pot of ale. Who should come in there but a traveller who deals, I am told, with several firms in this place. Well; he heard us talking about the strike, and not liking, seemingly, to overhear without speaking, like a spy, he joined in with us, and talked like a very sensible man,—more so than I should have expected, considering how much he has clearly been with the masters."

"You never miss a stroke at your old enemies, Bray."

"As long as they are enemies to me and such as me, I shall give them a hit at every turn. Well; this gentleman told us that he could speak to the dispositions of the masters, if any one could; and he was positive that if the men would take one step, they would soon have overtures from the masters. 'If,' said he, 'they will prevent Clack from having anything to do with their strike, the masters will begin to come round from that moment.'"

"Turn *me* out!" exclaimed Clack. "Prevent *my* having anything to do——"

Bray pursued as if Clack were a hundred miles off. " 'They think that fellow,' says he, 'a vulgar speechifier that knows nothing about the matter in dispute, and is only fit to delude the more ignorant among the spinners and to libel the masters. Send him back into the crowd where his proper place is, and then you will see what the masters have to say to the Committee.' "

Allen endeavoured to stop remarks which it must be painful enough to Clack to hear under any form, and which were made needlessly offensive by Bray, who was rather glad of the opportunity of giving a set down to the mischief-maker. Clack was necessarily soon stopped also by general consent. He raged and vowed revenge in such a style that it was plainly right to dismiss him now if it had not been so before. He could no longer be trusted with any degree of power against the masters, if the Committee wished to preserve their character for impartiality. As soon as he could be persuaded to leave the room to have his case considered, it was agreed to recommend him to resign, if he wished to avoid being regularly deposed at the next public meeting. He preferred the appeal to the public; and his companions could only hope that the masters would hear of what had passed, and would take the will for the deed.

It was next proposed by a member of the Committee that a sum of money should be presented to Allen in consideration of his services; and he had the pain of hearing himself lauded at

the expense of Clack, according to what seemed the general rule, to admire one man in proportion to the contempt with which another was treated. If Rowe was railed at, Wentworth was praised; if Clack was complained of, Allen was immediately extolled. Being aware of this, Allen would have declined the gift, if for no other reason than that a fit of generosity might be transient; but he had other reasons for refusing to listen to all mention of a gift. He chose to keep his disinterestedness beyond all question; and he feared that the funds were about to decline on the whole, though liberal contributions were looked for from particular places.

To stop further argument, which he intended should be unavailing, he returned brief thanks to his companions and broke up the Committee.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TETE-A-TETE.

It was the policy of the Committee to hold the public meetings of the workmen on pay-days, in order that they might appear on the green refreshed and in good spirits, and thus give the masters the most favourable impression possible of their resources and of the vigour with which they meant to maintain the strike. This arrangement had not the effect of raising the

spirits of the leaders. Pay-day was an anxious and painful day to them. In addition to all the sad stories of distress which they must hear, and the discontent which they must witness, there was a perpetual dread of the fund appearing to decline, and of the confidence of the people being therefore shaken. It was frequently necessary to borrow money,—sometimes as much as a hundred pounds at a time,—on the security of what was to come in during the next week ; and even those least disposed to foresight could not help asking themselves and each other what was to be done next time, if the remittances of the week should not superabound.

Allen was turning these things over in his mind as he proceeded to the Spread-Eagle on the morning of the day when Clack was expected to be dismissed from the Committee by the public voice. News was afloat which did not tend to cheer his spirits, though he thought he discerned in it a sign that the measures already taken concerning Clack were prudent. Ann Howlett, Clack's betrothed, had been taken up on a charge of breach of contract, and had been committed to prison by the magistrate. This woman having been singled out as an example seemed to indicate enmity against Clack ; and if it was indeed necessary to propitiate the masters by sacrificing him, it was well that the sacrifice was offered by the Committee before the arrest of the woman instead of in consequence of it. A more painful piece of intelligence followed. Immediately after this arrest, a carrier, who was

conveying work into the country for Mortimer and Rowe, was attacked on his way out of the town, his cart ransacked, himself beaten, and the work carried off in triumph. Ten or twelve men had been concerned in the outrage; and it was acknowledged that they belonged to the Union; but Allen in vain attempted to learn who they were. His integrity was so well known, that it was understood that he would deliver the offenders up to justice, be they who they might; and therefore, though many knew, no one would tell. Mute signs and obscure hints conveyed that Clack headed the enterprise; but nothing in the shape of evidence was offered.

Mr. Rowe was standing at his window when Allen's gossips left him to pursue his way. The gentleman threw up the sash, looked cautiously up and down the street, to ascertain whether he was observed, and then mysteriously beckoned to Allen to come into the house.

"What do you want with me, sir?"

"I want a little conversation with you, that's all. Can't you come in for a quarter of an hour?"

"If I could find any one to take my place at the board," replied Allen, who thought that some overture might be coming. "If you will let me step to the Spread-Eagle or write a note, I am at your service."

The plan of writing a note was preferred, on condition that Allen should not say whence or why he wrote. He saw that the gentleman glanced over his shoulder, to see whether he kept

his word, and turning sharp round, held up the paper in Rowe's face, saying,

"There is honour on the part of us men, I assure you, sir, whatever suspicion there is on the part of you gentlemen. Read the note, if you please."

Rowe did as he was desired, disclaiming suspicion, of course, and getting entangled in a complimentary speech which Allen listened to very quietly, waiting, with his arms by his side, for the end of it.

As an ending did not come readily, however, the gentleman broke off in order to send the note. He gave a penny to a child in the street to carry the note to the Spread-Eagle, and run away directly without saying where he came from; and then returning, made Allen sit down and take a glass of ale,—particularly fine ale,—such capital ale that the gentleman often indulged himself in a draught with a friend.

When nothing more remained to be said about ale, Mr. Rowe sighed, and observed what a pity it was that people should fall out to their mutual injury, and that those who had power to reconcile differences should not endeavour to do so.

Allen asked what party was meant by this description.

"You," replied Rowe, shaking him warmly by the hand. "You must know, Allen, that you can do what you please in the Union; and I only wish you knew how the masters look up to you, and respect your manly, moderate con-

duct. Any proposition from you would meet with attention from both parties; if you would ——”

“ I beg pardon, sir; but you forget that my propositions are before the masters already, and do not meet with attention. My propositions are those adopted by the Union——”

“ Yes, yes; I know well enough what they are; but you must bring forward something new. Is there nothing else you can propose that we can support without going from our word?”

“ Just tell me plainly,” said Allen, “ since you seem to like plain speaking: will you yourself make a concession about raising the wages to a middle point, if we yield some of our demands of equal importance?”

“ Why, you see,” replied Rowe, edging his chair closer, and filling Allen’s glass, “ I don’t want to come forward the first in this kind of thing. Indeed, as a junior partner, I ought not so to commit myself. I can’t be the first, you see; but I have no objection to be the second. Yes, you may, between you and me, depend upon my being the second.”

“ Between you and me!” exclaimed Allen, laughing. “ That leaves me nothing to propose to the meeting. See now how they would laugh at me!—‘ My fellow-workmen, I propose that we should lower our demands because a person (I am not at liberty to say who) offers, between himself and me, to yield in part after others have yielded.’ Why, sir, they would jeer me off the

stand, or bid me say to their concealed opponent, 'Thank you for nothing. If others have yielded first, we shall owe nothing to you.'"

"Well but, Allen, you don't seem to me to know the difficulty I am in, if you use my name. You don't know how unpleasant——"

"Pardon me, sir, I do know. You and I are neither of us men of nerve, Mr. Rowe, and so far, you have chosen your listener well. Clack would have laughed in your face, by this time, and been half way to the Spread-Eagle to tell the people there all that you have been saying; but I have so far a sympathy with you that I know the misery of looking round and seeing entanglement with one party or another on every side—blame from one or another sure to come. I know the longing to be somehow out of the scrape, the shrinking back with the hope of keeping out of sight, the dread of every one that comes near lest some new difficulty should be arising. I can pity you, sir, for all these feelings, for I have felt them myself."

"Have you? have you indeed?" replied Rowe, grasping his hand again. "What a sad thing it is for you, then, to be a leader of a turn-out."

"I am of a different opinion, sir. Because these feelings are natural to some persons, it does not follow that they should be indulged. It will not do to indulge them, sir, believe me. We have our duties as well as men of our make on the field of battle; and we must surrender ourselves, like them, to our duties, or be dis-

graced in our own eyes. Happen what will within us or without us, it is for you and me to speak out, to act openly, and bear the consequences. You will excuse my freedom."

Another grasp of the hand, with a speech about the secretary's integrity; upon which Allen rose, saying,—

"Then as we are of one mind, sir, suppose we go together to the meeting, and say what we have to say there, instead of shut up in this parlour. I believe I can promise you a courteous hearing."

"O no, no; that is quite out of the question. I have no offer, you know, to make on behalf of the masters,—nothing to say that I should think of occupying the meeting with."

"Then you can have nothing to say to me, sir, since, as an individual, I have no power to negotiate. Good morning, Mr. Rowe."

"Stay a moment, Allen. You understand that the men are not to know of this interview; and it is of more importance still that the masters should not. Promise me, Allen."

"I can promise no such thing," said Allen, returning from the door. "I regard your consent to be the second to raise wages as a concession, and I was going to report it to Mr. Wentworth."

"For God's sake don't!"

"I must," said Allen, firmly; and all entreaty, all reproach, was in vain.

"At least, don't give up the name. The fact will do just as well without the name. Give me

your word to conceal the name till you see me again."

Out of pure compassion, Allen yielded thus far. Mr. Rowe accompanied him to the house-door, harping upon "the name, the name," till Allen turned round to say gravely,

"A promise once given is enough, sir, between honest men. I have given you my word."

"True, true, my good friend. It is only a trick I have got of repeating my sentences."

And the gentleman shut the door behind his guest, feeling very like a child who has persuaded her maid not to tell her governess who broke the china cup; knowing all the time that the mishap must come to light, and trembling every time any one goes near the cupboard.

CHAPTER IX.

A PUBLIC MEETING.

"How much did you fall short to-day?" inquired Allen, as he joined in with a group of committee-men going to the meeting.

"Sixty pounds; but we shall make it up before three days are over, depend upon it; and, besides, the masters will yield as soon as Clack is done for, you'll see. Wentworth is before us, going to the meeting. But what have you been about, Allen, playing truant on pay-day?"

"Preaching fortitude and giving a fillip to the faint-hearted."

"As Christian a duty as feeding the hungry and easing the poor," observed a companion. **"If Allen is absent from a good deed, you may be sure he is doing a better."**

There was no part of Allen's duty that he disliked more than opening the weekly meetings. The applause discomposed him. He could not, like Clack, make a deprecating flourish of the hands, or shake his head modestly, or look round with a proud smile. He was very apt to fidget, and swing his hat, and make a short, ungraceful bow. As soon as he found this out, he adopted one posture, from which he determined not to move till the thing was over. He folded his arms and dropped his head upon his breast, and so stood as if facing a gust of wind, till the clapping had sunk into silence.—This day, the clapping on his appearance was twice as long and twice as vehement as usual, Clack's former popularity being transferred to himself. Mr. Wentworth appeared in time to share his honours, and to relieve him from applause, which seemed as if it would never end. Clack would fain have appropriated both series of cheers; but he could not manage it. As soon as he began to bow and look flattered, there arose cries of "Off, off!" which strengthened into groans when he attempted to brave them. With a nervous sneer, the orator observed to those within hearing that his time would soon come, when he would carry off more cheers than any of them.

"Better put yourself under Allen's wing, if you want to be clapped," observed Mr. Went-

worth. "I conclude it was because I stood next to him that they cheered me to-day, instead of groaning, as they did a week ago. We must submit to be beholden to Allen—hey, Clack?"

With a look of ineffable contempt, the orator withdrew as far as he could from Allen, without going out of sight, while Mr. Wentworth sat down to take a pinch of snuff on the edge of the waggon in which the speakers were stationed.

The object of the meeting was to obtain the opinions of the people on certain questions to be proposed; and, in order to put Clack out of the pain of suspense, his affair was the first brought on. Allen expressed himself in the most moderate terms he could devise, saying that it sometimes happened that the usefulness of an individual was not in proportion to his zeal in the cause he had espoused, or to his desire to fulfil its duties, especially where the likings of two opposite parties had to be consulted; that it so happened, in the present case, that the individual in question did not possess the confidence of the masters, and that his remaining a member of the Committee might therefore prove an obstacle in the way of an amicable agreement. It was for the meeting to declare whether they were willing to take the chance of an accommodation by naming some substitute for Clack, who might be equally energetic in their service, and more agreeable to their employers. After a pause, and with evident effort, he added, that if the conduct of the person in question had been, in all respects, such as the Union could approve, it would have

gone hard with the committee before they would have sanctioned his removal from office ; but, as it seemed too evident that the cause had received injury by his means in ways which he might be spared the pain of pointing out, they might consider themselves relieved from the perplexity of reconciling consideration for the individual with a regard to the interests of the body.

A hubbub ensued ; a strong party of Clack's friends raising shouts on his behalf, while opposing cries rose on all sides of " Down with the blusterer ! " " Who waylaid the carrier ? " " He is none of us. The Union keeps the laws. " " Law and concord ! No Clack ! "

Quiet was restored on Mr. Wentworth's rising to explain that his being present was not to be considered as a sign that the masters would yield on Clack's dismissal. He had no authority to confirm any such belief.

Applause,—and Clack doomed by an overwhelming majority ; whereupon his supporters made their way to the waggon, agreed with him that the meeting was not worth addressing, even if he *had* been allowed to speak ; and carried him off on their shoulders to fish for popularity in the streets of Manchester, while the meeting conducted its affairs as well as it could without him. So ended that matter, except that somehow Clack and his party were forestalled in their return into the town, and the walls everywhere presented, conspicuous in white chalk, the phrase which still rang in their ears, " Law and Concord ! No Clack ! " An extraordinary number

of little boys too seemed to have taken the fancy to mimick the action of weaving, with arm and foot, crying at the same time

“ Clickity, clickity, clack,
Lay him on his back !
Clickity, clickity, clack,
Away let him pack ! ”

Far more decorous was the meeting in their rear, while the queries were dismissed, each in its turn.

“ The case of Ann Howlett being admitted by all parties to be a hard one, (her contract being for wages which would not support her,) was her breach of contract sanctioned by the Union ? ”

Shouts of “ No ; we would have helped her to perform it ! ”

“ If this breach of contract had been sanctioned by the Union, was it thought lawful revenge for the committal of Ann Howlett to waylay the carrier and strip his cart ? ”

Groans, and shouts of “ No revenge ! ”

Some one near the cart having spoken to Allen, he put the question,—

“ Supposing this attack to have no connexion with Ann Howlett’s affair, does the Union sanction forcible attempts to prevent work being carried into the country ? ”

Answer, “ No. Law and Concord for ever ! ”

“ If the men abide by the law, and the masters are found disposed to concord, will the Union be disposed to concession ? ”

Mixed cries, the most distinguishable of which was, “ Stick by the Union ! The Union for ever ! ”

Mr. Wentworth and Allen exchanged nods, as much as to say, "You see"—"Yes, I see."

"Supposing the Union to be preserved entire, are its members disposed to any concession in respect of wages?"

Cries of "Equalization!"

"An equalization is, as the Committee knows, indispensable; but the point on which the Committee has not yet received your instructions is whether that equalization may be fixed below the highest rate, *viz.*, that which Elliott is now giving?"

The answers were at first hesitating, then confused, so that no one prevailed.

"Don't press for an answer yet," said Mr. Wentworth. "I may tell them something which may help their judgments."

Way was made for Mr. Wentworth, and he presented himself to speak.

"Before you put this question to the vote, let me just mention a circumstance or two that you may not be aware of, from your having been lately out of communication with the factories. There are few things that we hear more of than of the changes that all mortal things are liable to; and these changes affect the affair we have in hand, like all other affairs. We are told that every one rises from sleep in the morning a different man from him who lay down at night; there having been a waste and repair of the substance of which the bodily man is composed. In the same manner, you may find that your strike is a different thing to-day from what it was at its beginning. Some of its parts have fallen off,

and others have been added. Whether your body, having undergone this change, be the more vigorous, like a man refreshed with sleep, you know better than I. But further, whenever you return to your work, you may find a factory a very different place on re-entering from what it was on your leaving it. There has been much waste, I fear, without any repair. You know what kind of waste I refer to. You have heard of large orders, which we have been unable to execute, having been sent to Scotland and elsewhere. You know that much of our capital, which ought by this time to be returning to us again, has been for many weeks locked up in our stocks of raw material. You know that the expense of keeping on our establishments has not been repaid by the production of goods for the market ; or the cost of maintaining ourselves and our families, by the profitable employment of our time and our wits. We have been consuming idly, and so have you ; and thus there must needs have been great waste.—And what is it which has been thus wasted ? The fund which is to maintain you ; the fund out of which your wages are paid. Your strike has already lasted long enough to change our ground of dispute. You will find that the question with the masters now is, whether fewer of you than before shall be employed at the same wages, or fewer still at higher wages, or as many as before at lower wages than you have yet received. Keep on your strike a little longer, and the question will be, how many less shall be employed, at how much less.

Keep it on long enough, and the question will be entirely settled; there will be no wages for anybody. Do you understand me?"

The speaker took snuff while the murmur of disapprobation went round, and then continued.

"I do not suppose, any more than you, that we shall come to this pass, because your capital must be exhausted sooner than ours, and then you must have bread, and will come to us for work before our fund for wages is all wasted away; but the nearer you drive us to this point, the more injury you do yourselves. Let me hear your objection, friend," he continued to a man in the crowd who looked eager to speak. "Where do you think me wrong? You acknowledge that a strike is a bad thing, but sometimes necessary to obtain a good one. Refusing wages altogether for a time, is to be the means of securing better afterwards. Do I understand you right? Why, that would be very true if you had the power or were in the habit of keeping workmen and wages in proportion to each other. If the masters had more capital than was necessary to pay you all at the rate you have hitherto received, you might gain your point by a strike, not as you sometimes do now, just for a little time till the masters can shake themselves free of their engagement,—but permanently. But this is not the case. The masters' capital does not return enough to pay you all at the rate you desire. If they are to keep their capital entire, you must either take less wages, or fewer of you must take wages at all.

If you will all have the wages you desire, the capital which pays them wastes away, and ruin approaches. This is the worst event that could happen, as I am sure we shall all agree. Your alternative, therefore, is to withdraw a portion of your people from taking wages, or all to take less than you are striking for. You are not satisfied yet? (speaking to the same man.) Well, let me hear. There are places where there are no strikes, because the workmen get as high wages as they wish for? Very true; there are such places, and London is one; concerning which I heard, the other day, a case in point.

“ The money wages of skilled labour in London were higher from 1771 to 1798 than was ever known. They had been raised because prices were high. They were afterwards somewhat lowered; but as prices fell in a greater proportion after the war, the real wages of skilled labour are at present higher than they had ever been. They cannot be lowered while, as at present, there is an occasional deficiency of labour, since the men would strike when most wanted by the masters, and the loss thus caused would be greater than the gain of giving lower wages. In London there are two seasons in every year; a slack season in which many workmen remain unemployed; and a busy season in which they work overhours, because there are not hands enough. Now, here, you see, lies their advantage; in the supply of labour being limited. If it was the case with them, as with you, that some of their class always remained unemployed, the

unemployed would undersell the busy, and wages would fall. Then, as here, there would be strikes; and then, as here, strikes would be of no avail. Where there are permanently fewer workmen than are wanted the men hold the power. Where there is the exact number that is wanted, the power is equal, and the contest fair. Where there are more than are wanted, even to the extent of three unemployed to a hundred, the power is in the masters' hands, and strikes must fail. Must there not be a larger surplus of unemployed labour than this in our neighbourhood, and elsewhere, since wages are fallen too low to enable the labourer to do more than barely exist? Allen, is there a silk small-ware weaver present, do you suppose? They have just struck, I find."

Proclamation was made for a silk small-ware weaver, and several held up their hands. In answer to questions, they stated that within two years their wages had been reduced forty-five per cent. Two years before, common galloon weaving was paid at the rate of 1s. 10d. per gross; it was now reduced to 1s. 4d. per gross; and it was for an addition of 2d. per gross that the men struck: little enough when it is considered that, in the winter season, a weaver cannot average more than twelve gross per week. As he has to pay for the hire of his loom, for winding, for candle-light, and other expenses belonging to his work, he has left only about 8s. a week for himself and his family.

"Could so dreadful a reduction have ever

taken place," continued Mr. Wentworth, "if you had not undersold one another? And how are the masters to help you if you go on increasing your numbers and underselling one another, as if your employers could find occupation for any number of millions of you, or could coin the stones under your feet into wages, or knead the dust of the earth into bread? They do what they can for you in increasing the capital on which you are to subsist; and you must do the rest by proportioning your numbers to the means of subsistence. But see how the masters are met! In Huddersfield the masters are doing their utmost to extend their trade; but the multitudes who are to subsist by it increase much faster. There are now thirteen thousand work-people in that place who toil for twopence half-penny a day. At Todmorden, the most skilful work fourteen hours a day for the pittance of one shilling. In the fair county of Kent there are thirty thousand who earn no more than sixpence a day. Compare this state of things with the condition of skilled labour wages in London, and see how much depends on the due proportion of labourers, and the capital by which they are to be fed. Would you could be convinced that your strike, besides occasioning vexation and ill-will between the two parties, besides inflicting distress upon yourselves, and inconvenience upon your employers, cannot but be worse than in vain!"

During the last few sentences, several persons had been engaged in conference with Bray, who

leaned over a corner of the waggon to hear what they had to say. He now came forward and placed himself beside Mr. Wentworth, observing that all that had fallen from the gentleman seemed pretty true and reasonable as far as it went, but that it did not at all explain what course the people had now to pursue. It was poor comfort to tell the people that wages could not be any higher on account of their numbers, since it was not in their power to lessen those numbers.

“ It is not with the view of giving present comfort,” replied Mr. Wentworth, “ that I represent what appears to me to be the truth : for alas ! there is but little comfort in the case any way. My object is to prevent your making a bad case worse ; and if it were possible, to persuade you not to prepare for your descendants a repetition of the evils under which you are yourselves suffering. All that you can now do, is to live as you best may upon such wages as the masters can give, keeping up your sense of respectability and your ambition to improve your state when better times shall come. You must watch every opportunity of making some little provision against the fluctuations of our trade, contributing your money rather for your mutual relief in hard times, than for the support of strikes. You must place your children out to different occupations, choosing those which are least likely to be overstocked ; and, above all, you must discourage in them the imprudent, early marriages to which are mainly owing the distresses

which afflict yourselves and those which will for some time, I fear, oppress your children. You ask me what you must do. These things are all that I can suggest."

"But these things, sir, will not guard our children any more than ourselves from the fluctuations in trade you speak of."

"But they will prevent those fluctuations from being so injurious as they now are. The lower wages are, the more are such fluctuations felt. In India, where an average day's wages are only three-pence, the people live in the poorest possible manner,—such as the poorest of you have no idea of. Any decrease of wages, therefore, makes the more weakly of the labourers lie down and die. In Ireland, where the average is five-pence a day, there is less positive starvation than in India, but more distress on a fall of wages, than in England. In England, such fluctuations are less felt than in old days, when the people knew nothing of many things which you now call necessaries. The better the state of the people, the better able are they to stand against the changes to which all trades are liable; but the worst of it is that we are all too little inclined to foresee the effects of these changes, and to provide for them; and when we experience the necessary consequences of a change which took place twenty years before, we are apt to suppose these consequences arise from something amiss at the present time. When a demand for any article of manufacture makes labour unusually profitable, labourers provide for

a great decline of wages in future years, by bringing up large families to the same employment. During many years, that is, while their children are growing up, they feel no ill effects, and suppose that all is going on right. When a decline of wages comes, they suppose it happens from some new circumstance, and not from their own deed in overstocking the labour market. Again; it must be some time before the effects of a decline in lessening the supply of labour are felt. A part of the population perishes slowly from want and misery, and others are made prudent in respect of marriage; but by the time these checks are seen to operate, a new period of prosperity has arrived, which is ascribed by the people to accident. It is this impossibility of making the supply of labour suit the demand at a moment's notice, which makes fluctuations in trade so sensibly felt, for good or for evil, by the labourer. Since he cannot, as you say, Mr. Bray, diminish the number of workmen when trade is slack, and if he wishes his descendants not to be plunged into degradation by extreme poverty, he will do what in him lies to prevent population from increasing faster than the capital which is to support it."

Mr. Wentworth was encouraged to pursue his argumentative manner of speaking by the attention of the people near the waggon. Some of them had become a little tired of the weekly meetings at which their orators had said the same things over and over again, and were pleased to be reasoned with by one whom they

esteemed, and to obtain, by these means, a better insight into their affairs than was given them by leaders who were all of one party. The more the present meeting assumed the character of a conference, the more eagerly the most thinking men in the crowd pressed towards the waggon, and cheered the questions and replies. Those on the outskirts, who were more fond of noise and display, were at liberty to come and go as they pleased; to listen to Mr. Wentworth, or to follow Clack.

Bray now observed that population must increase rapidly indeed, as it had outstripped the increase of capital in the cotton manufacture. He believed so rapid an increase of capital had never been known before. To this Mr. Wentworth replied by asking of the crowd whether there was any one among them who had known James Hargraves. An old man stepped forwards and said that he was a native of Blackburn, and had been accustomed, as a boy, to frequent Hargraves' workshop; that he remembered seeing the carpenter busy about his invention, and his own delight at having the design of the spinning-jenny explained to him by the inventor; he saw directly how eight threads could be spun instead of one, and thought it a very fine thing, and had little notion how soon it would be so much improved upon as that a little girl might work one hundred, or one hundred and twenty spindles. When was this? Why, a few years after the old king George began to reign; in 1767, he believed,

“When that king came to the throne,” observed Mr. Wentworth, “the whole value of the cotton goods manufactured in this country was only 200,000*l.* a year.”

“There were very few people employed in it then,” interrupted the old man. “We had no factories and no towns full of cotton-spinners and weavers. My father used to take his work home to his own cottage, and grow the flax that was then used for warp in his own garden, and set my mother to card and spin the raw cotton for the weft. This, and getting the warp from Ireland, was the way till Arkwright’s spinning frame came into use.”

“Then was the time, said Mr. Wentworth, “that the people in China and in India had no rivals in the market for whatever was made of cotton. We owe it to these machines, and the mule-jenny, and the power-loom that came in afterwards, that though we have to bring our cotton from thousands of miles off, and though the wages in India are, as I said, only 8*d.* a day, we have beaten them in the competition, and can carry back their cotton five thousand miles, made into a cheaper fabric than they can afford. Such powers as these must make our capital grow; and the fact is that the cotton manufacture is the chief business carried on in the country, and that it has enabled us to sustain burdens which would have crushed any other people. Instead of 200,000*l.*, the annual produce of the manufacture is now more than 36,000,000*l.* We have no means of knowing how few persons were

employed sixty years ago; but it is reckoned that the manufacture now affords subsistence to more than 1,400,000 persons. This enormous population has arisen naturally enough from the rise of the manufacture; but your present condition shows that it has already gone too far; and it rests with yourselves to determine whether the evil shall be found to have increased fifty years hence. And now, Allen, you know the reason of the clause I added to your query in the arbour."

"Will our trade go on increasing?" was the next question asked.

"I hope and trust that it will, as we have got the start of our competitors abroad; but it will probably increase at a slower rate; and a succession of strikes may prove its destruction."

Here the speaker abruptly ceased, and nothing could induce him to say more. He let himself down from the waggon, and quietly made his way through the crowd, thinking perhaps that the people would draw their inferences from what he had said more freely in his absence.

The substance of Mr. Wentworth's argument, and especially the last words he spoke, left Allen and others thoughtful. They would not, on the impulse of the moment, advise a compromise with the masters; but appointed another general meeting for the next day, to take into consideration some matters of important concern.

One matter of important concern was taken into immediate consideration, however. As soon as Allen had turned his back, some mem-

bers of the committee recalled the crowd for a few minutes, related how Allen had, from time to time, refused money in compensation for his services, and moved that a suit of clothes should be voted to him. This was a present which he could not refuse, if given under colour of enabling him to appear more respectably as their advocate before the masters, and would serve to make a proper distinction between such a sound friend to their cause as Allen, and such a frothy fellow as Clack. The motion was carried by acclamation ; and as all Allen's scruples were so forestalled as that he could not decline the gift, he was, before nightfall, clothed in a suit which must mark him out at the meetings as leader of the Union proceedings.

CHAPTER X.

HOPE DECLINING.

ALAS ! what is so fleeting as popularity ! Allen's was in great part gone before morning. Some mischievously disposed persons, who had marked what impression had been made on the mind of the secretary by Mr. Wentworth's speech, and who had afterwards ascertained that he wished to propose a compromise with the masters, took upon themselves to make known that the favourite

secretary had turned tail and meant to betray the cause. A general gathering about the waggon of all who scorned to be betrayed was advised, in order to keep his friends at a distance and to raise a hiss with the more effect. When, confident of his reception, Allen advanced with a smiling countenance, in order to express his gratification at the mark of esteem he had received, he was startled by a burst of groans and hisses. For a moment he looked about him to see if Clack or any other unpopular person was standing near; but signs not to be mistaken convinced him too soon that he was the object of the people's dislike. He coloured scarlet, and was about to cover his face with his hands, but checked himself, and, by a strong effort, stood it out. Those who were near him saw how the papers in his hand shook; but his countenance was fixed and his attitude firm. After many vain attempts to make himself heard, he stripped off his new coat, folded it up and placed it in the hands of the committee-men near, and sent a messenger home for his working dress. This he communicated to the meeting the first moment that they would let him speak. He would not accept any gift from those to whom his services were no longer acceptable. He was ready to resign his office,—an arduous office, which they no doubt remembered had been forced upon him,—as soon as they should direct him into whose hands he should deliver his papers. In the meanwhile, he would proceed with their business, forgetful of all personal considerations.

All propositions, whether made by himself or others, tending to a compromise, were rejected, and the meeting, after a stormy discussion, in which no point was settled, broke up. The whole affair put Clack and his friends in glee, and filled wiser people with grief and apprehension of the consequences.

The first consequence was that all the children were turned off. The masters were bent on bringing the affair to a close as speedily as possible; and, being disappointed in the hope that the men would propose a compromise, endeavoured to drive them to it.

This was thought by some parents far from being the worst thing that had happened. While the Committee shook their heads over this weighty additional item of weekly charge, many tender mothers stroked their children's heads and smiled when they wished them joy of their holiday, and bade them sleep on in the mornings without thinking of the factory bell.—It was some days before the little things got used to so strange a difference from their usual mode of life. Some would start up from sound sleep with the question, "Father, is it time?" Some talked in their sleep of being too late, and went on to devour their meals hastily, as if their time was not their own.—It would have amused some people and made others melancholy to watch the sports of these town-bred children. One little girl was seen making a garden;—that is, boring a hole between two flints in a yard with a rusty pair of scissors and inserting therein a

daisy which by some rare chance had reached her hands. Others collected the fragments of broken plates and teacups from the kennels, and spread them out for a mock feast where there was nothing to eat. The favourite game was playing at being cotton-spinners, a big boy frowning and strutting and personating the master, another with a switch in his hand being the overlooker, and the rest spinners or piecers, each trying which could be the naughtiest and get the most threats and scolding. Many were satisfied with lolling on the stairs of their dwellings and looking into the streets all day long; and many nursed their baby brothers and sisters, sitting on the steps or leaning against the walls of the street. Hannah Bray, when not abroad with her father, took pains to stir up her little neighbours to what she called play. She coaxed her father into giving them a ball, and tried to teach the children in the next yard to play hide and seek; but she often said she never before saw such helpless and awkward people. They could not throw a ball five feet from them, or flung it in one another's faces so as to cause complaints and crying-fits. In hiding, they always showed themselves, or came out too soon or not soon enough, or jostled and threw one another down; and they were the worst runners that could be conceived. Any one of them trying to catch Hannah looked like a duck running after a greyhound. Hannah began with laughing at them all round; but observing that her father watched their play with tears in his eyes, she afterwards contented

herself with wondering in silence why some children were so unlike others.

The affairs of all concerned in the strike looked more and more dismal every day. There were more brawls in the streets; there was less peace at home; for none are so prone to quarrel as those who have nothing else to do, and whose tempers are at the same time fretted by want. All the men who were prone to drink now spent hour after hour at the alehouse, and many a woman now for the first time took to her "drop of comfort" at home. Many a man who had hitherto been a helper to his wife and tender to his children, began to slam the door behind him, after having beaten or shaken the little ones all round, and spoken rough words to their trembling mother. While she, dashing away her tears, looked for something to do, and found one thing that she would wash if she had fuel and soap, and another that she would mend if she had material and cotton.—Now was the time to see the young woman, with the babe in her arms, pushing at the curtained door of the dram-shop, while her husband held it against her,—he saying,—"Well, I tell you I'm coming in five minutes; I shan't be five minutes,"—and she plaintively replying, "Ah, I know, you always say so."—Now was the time to see the good son pacing slowly to the pawnbroker's to pledge his aged mother's last blanket to buy her bread. These were the days when the important men under the three balls civilly declared, or insolently swore, that they could and would take no more goods in

pawn, as their houses were full from top to bottom, and there was no sale for what they had encumbered themselves with. Never before had they been so humbly petitioned for loans,—a mother shewing that her winter shawl or her child's frock would take very little room,—or a young girl urging that if a pawnbroker did not want her grandmother's old bible he could get more for it at a book-stall than she could. These were the times for poor landlords to look after their rents, and for hard landlords to press for them. These were the days for close scrutiny to be made by the Union Committee whether men's wives were really lying-in, and whether each really had the number of children he swore to; and, therefore, these were the times when knaves tried to cheat and when honest men were wounded at having their word questioned. Now was the time when weak-minded men thought themselves each worse off than his neighbour. Many landlords were pronounced the hardest that ever owned two paltry rooms; many an applicant was certain the committee had been set against him by some sneaking enemy. In the abstract it was allowed, however, that the sneakers had the most to bear. Hare, for one, was in the depth of distress. Opposition was made, week after week, to his having any relief from the committee because he was not a hearty member of the Union; and on one occasion, when he had with the utmost difficulty obtained an extra shilling for his lying-in wife, and had failed in his plea that he was dunned for rent, he found on

returning home that his landlord had sent in the officers during his abrence, who had taken away all the little he possessed, but the mattress on which his wife lay. It was laid on the floor, the bedstead being gone; and the children and their mother were left crying within four bare walls.—Allen, to whose knowledge this hard case was brought, could do little to relieve it; but he almost succeeded in convincing his nervous wife that their own sufferings were light in comparison. Yet they had many painful sacrifices to make,—the more painful to Allen because his wife was not convinced that they were necessary. She urged that he might now ask for some of the money the Committee had formerly offered him, since his services had not been repaid even in empty good-will, to the degree that he deserved. It was his duty, she thought, to demand more than the common weekly allowance; and the least he could do for his children was to take the suit of clothes back again which he had thrown away in a pet. Failing in her arguments, she had recourse to two measures,—one of action and the other of persuasion. She went secretly to the Committee, and asked in her husband's name for the clothes, which she sold on her way home, trying to persuade herself that she was only doing a mother's duty in providing her children with bread; and then she assailed her husband on the subject of taking work at the master's prices. She knew that he now wished for a compromise and thought the strike had been continued too long, and she

would not see why he was bound to wait till the Union viewed the matter as he did. She thought it very cruel to talk of honour, and very absurd to plead duty when he knew that his family were in want, and could not deny that it was not by his own choice that he had filled so conspicuous a station. It made Allen very miserable to hear her talk in this manner, sobbing between almost every word she said; especially when little Martha looked wistfully from one to the other, not understanding the grounds of the dispute, but hoping that it would end in father's leaving off walking about the room in that manner, and in mother's stopping her sobs, and in there being something better than those nasty potatoes for dinner. Once or twice she tried to make her bulfinch sing so loud that they could not hear one another speak; but this did not do, for her mother twitched off her apron and flung it over the cage, so that the poor bird cowered down in a corner for the whole day afterwards.

One morning when Allen had persuaded his wife that he was immovable, and that the best thing she could do was to go out and buy some potatoes with what money they had, he came and leaned over the table to see Martha feed her bird.

"You are as fond of that bird as ever, Martha."

"Yes,—and I have so much time to teach him things now."

"Had you rather play with him or be at the factory all day?"

"I don't know. My knees are so much better

since I have been at home, and I like playing with Billy ; but mother has got to cry so lately ; and, father, we are all so tired of potatoes, we don't know how to eat them."

" Poor child ! I wish we could give you anything better. But, Martha, do you think you could bear to stay at home without Billy ? "

Martha's countenance fell.

" You see, my dear child, we have sold almost everything we have ; and when we can scarcely get food for ourselves, it does not seem to me right to keep animals to feed. This was why I sold the dog so many weeks ago."

" But, father, it is only just a halfpenny now and then. Mother has always found me a halfpenny now and then for Billy."

" A halfpenny is as much to us now, child, as a guinea is to some people ; besides we could get money by Billy. Ah ! I knew it would make you cry to say so."

And he left her and walked about the room in the way which it always frightened Martha to see. She sobbed out a few words,—

" I can't—I can't help crying, father, but I don't mean—I wish you would take Billy and sell him."

" Listen to me, my dear child," said Allen sitting down by her, and putting his arm round her waist. " You were always a very good little girl in working industriously as long as you had work. Now you cannot earn money by working, but you can get some by giving up your bird. Now, you know I always tried to make you as comfortable as I could when you earned

money, and I promise you, that I will do the same if you will let me sell your bird. The very first money that I can properly spare, when better days come, shall go to buy you a bird, and this very bird if we can get it back again."

Martha thanked him, and said the bird should go for certain; but if this very bird could not be got back again, she would rather have a triangle like Hannah's, and then, she thought, they might all grow rich. Allen smiled and said they would see about that when the time came; in the meanwhile, if Billy was to go, the sooner the better, and all the more as she had just cleaned the cage; and he took his hat.

Martha struggled with her tears, and asked if she might go too. Her father thought she had better not; but she said nobody could make Billy sing all his songs so well as herself; so her father kissed her, and let her follow him down stairs, asking Field's wife who happened to be in good humour, to have an eye to the children till their mother came home.

It was a sad trial to Martha to hear the bird-fancier speak slightly of her pet, and remark that the cage was very shabby. She had a great mind at first to make Billy seem dull, which she knew how to do: but remembering that this would punish nobody but her father, she put away the evil thought, and made Billy sing his best songs in his clearest tone. The bargain was made; her father bade the bird-fancier pay the money into her hand, and whispered that he wished he had anything which would sell for so

much. When they were on the threshold, she once more turned round. The man was twirling the cage in a business-like manner, between his hands. "O, once more!" cried Martha, running back. Once more Billy fluttered at the sight of her, and put out his beak between the wires to meet her lips; and then she went away without looking back any more. Every day for the next fortnight, however, little Martha lingered about the bird-fancier's door, doing all she could without being observed, to set Billy singing. One day she was remarked by her parents to be very silent; and after that she went out less. She had missed Billy, though his empty cage still hung in the shop; and having made bold to ask, had found that he was sold to a country customer; really gone for ever. This hope destroyed, Martha tried to comfort herself, as she had proposed, with visions of a triangle.

CHAPTER XI.

FINAL DELIBERATION.

THE spirits of the people were sunk, not only by poverty, but by a more bitter disappointment than had attended any former strike. The Combination Laws having formerly been the great object of dread and hatred, it had been too hastily supposed that the repeal of these laws would

give all that was wanted ; whereas the repeal only left the people free to make the best bargain they could for their labour, without its having any thing to do with the grounds of the bargain. The repeal could not increase the supply of capital, or diminish the supply of labour ; it could not therefore affect the rate of wages.

One more event was looked to with hope ; the arrival of the delegates who had travelled in search of support. They had remitted money as they had received it, and the remittances had fallen off much of late ; but it was still hoped that the messengers might bring such assurances of sympathy and support, as might justify the people in holding out a little longer. These men, who returned nearly all at the same time, were met some miles out on the road, greeted with cheers, carried to the Committee-room, and with difficulty left alone with the Committee to tell their business.

These men brought advice and intelligence so various as might have perplexed the most discerning and prudent of all managers of public affairs. There were exhortations from some places to hold out to the very last shilling ; and from others to retreat, while retreat could be managed with honour. Some distant friends gave them a kindly warning to look for no more contributions from that quarter ; and others were sorry to send so little at present, but hoped to raise such and such sums before they should be much wanted. Some sent word that it had always been a bad case which they could not

in conscience support, while so many more promising needed help ; others declared that if ever there was a righteous cause, this was it, and that they should brand with the name of traitor the first who quailed. While the members of the Committee sighed and inquired of one another what they were to think of such opposite advice, and each delegate was vehement in urging the superior value of that which he brought, Allen proposed that they should abide by the advice of the London delegates, who had been in communication with persons who understood more of the matter in hand, than any who occupied a less central situation. All agreed to this, and the consideration of the matter was deferred till the next morning, when the delegates were expected to have arrived from London.

Every member of the Committee was in his place the next morning, and the expected messengers appeared at the foot of the table, and delivered in their report, which was brief enough. Their London friends believed their strike to be in a hopeless condition, and advised their making the best terms they could with their masters, without any further waste of time and capital. Not that all combinations were disapproved of by their London advisers ; there were cases in which such union was highly desirable, cases of especial grievance from multiplication of apprentices, or from unfair methods of measuring work, or from gross inequality of wages, &c. ; but for a general and permanent rise of wages, no strike could ultimately prevail, where there was a permanent

proportion of unemployed labour in the market. A proportion of three per cent. of unemployed labour must destroy their chance against the masters.

“Just what Wentworth told us,” observed a committee-man. “Pray did you inquire whether it is possible to get a rate of wages settled by law?”

“Of course, as we were instructed so to do; and the answer is what you probably expect,—that unless the law could determine the amount of capital, and the supply of labour, it cannot regulate wages. The law might as well order how much beef every man shall eat for his daily dinner, without having any power to supply cattle. If there be not cattle enough, men cannot have law beef. If there be not capital enough, men cannot have law wages.”

“Besides,” observed the other delegate, ‘wages-laws involve the same absurdity as the combination laws we are so glad to have got rid of. Every man who is not a slave has a right to ask a price for his labour; and if one man has this right, so have fifty or fifty thousand. What is an innocent act in itself, cannot be made guilt by being done by numbers; and if Government treats it as guilt, Government treats those who do it as slaves. Government then interferes where it has no business. This was the argument in the case of the combination laws, and it holds in this case too: Government is neither buyer nor seller, and has nothing to do with the bargain; and having nothing to do with it, could

neither pass a just wages-law, nor enforce it when passed, any more than in the case of the combination laws, which we all know to have been unjust and perpetually evaded."

As it was now clear that the turn-out must come to a speedy end, the committee decided to waste no more time in discussion, but to proceed to immediate action. Allen begged to produce the accounts, which were balanced up to the present day, and the sight of which would, he thought, quicken their determination to let all get work who could. He had for some time found it difficult to get a hearing on the subject of the accounts, as his brethren were bent on holding out, and would listen to nothing which opposed their wishes; but they were now completely roused. "How much have we left?" was their first question.

"Left!" exclaimed Allen. "You know I have been telling you for this fortnight past that we are deficient 70*l.*, without reckoning the bills for advertisements, which had not then come in, and which, I am sorry to say, swell the amount considerably."

This declaration was received with murmurs, and on the part of some, with loud declarations that there must have been mistake or bad management.

Allen passed his hand over his forehead, while enduring the bitter pang caused by this outcry; but he recovered himself instantly.

"There are the accounts," he said. "See for yourselves whether there has been any mistake,

and bring home to me, if you can, your charge of bad management. You pressed the task upon me in the first instance against my will; you referred it to my disinterestedness to resume it, when, fearing that I had lost the confidence of the people, I would have resigned it. At your call, I have done my best, and—this is my reward!”

There was a cry of “Shame, shame!” and two or three friends rose in turn to say for Allen what he was too modest to say for himself; that the unthankful office had been repeatedly forced upon him, because there was no other man who could discharge it so well; that he had never been detected in a mistake, never found in the rear of his business, never accepting fee or reward, never—

This eulogium was interrupted by objections. He *had* erred in involving the Union with the editor of a newspaper, who now unexpectedly brought an enormous charge for the insertion of notices, intelligence, &c., which it had been supposed he was glad to print gratuitously. Allen *had* also claimed fee and reward in a way which, to say the best of it, was shabby.

Allen calmly related the facts of the transaction with the editor, leaving it to his judges to decide whether the misunderstanding arose from carelessness on his part, or from some other cause. As to the other charge, what fee or reward had he taken?

“The clothes, the clothes!” was the cry. “To send for them privately to sell, after pre-

tending to give them back in the face of the people. Fie! Shabby!"

Allen looked on his thread-bare dress with a smile, supposing this a mistake which a moment would clear up. He went to the press belonging to the committee, where the clothes had been deposited, and flung open the doors. He looked very naturally surprised at their having disappeared, and turned round with an open countenance to say,

"I see how it is. Some dishonest person has used my name to obtain possession of the clothes. I give you my word of honour that I have never seen the clothes, or known that they were not here, since the hour that I gave them back in the face of the people."

All believed him, and some had consideration enough to command silence by gesture; but before it could take effect, the fact was out, that Allen's own wife was the "dishonest person." While he silently walked to the window, and there hid his face in his hands, his friends called on business which attracted attention from him. It was pay-day, and what was to be done? What funds were in hand?

Allen returned to his seat to answer this question; and, as all were just now disposed to do as he pleased, he carried his point of honesty, and obtained authority to lessen the allowance one-half, and give advice to every applicant to attend the afternoon meeting for the purpose of voting for the dissolution of the strike.

Of these applicants, some were glad, and some

were sorry to receive the advice of the paymaster; but there was a much greater unity of opinion about the reduction of the allowance. Some murmured, some clamoured, some silently wept, some sighed in resignation; but all felt it a great hardship, and wondered what was to become of them either way, if it was true, as Mr. Wentworth had said, that the wages-fund of the masters and the Union-fund of the men were wasting away together. Some were ready with bad news for Allen in return for that which he offered to them.

“ You will be worst off, after all, Allen; for there is not a master that will give you work.”

“ Did you hear, Allen, what Elliott said about you? He hopes you will go to him for work, that he may have the pleasure of refusing you.”

“ Mortimer has got a promise out of his cowardly partner, that he will not let you set foot on the premises, Allen, on account of the part you have taken.”

“ They say, Allen, that you are a marked man in Manchester, and that no master in any trade will take you in among his men. What do you think of doing, I wonder?”

This question Allen could not have answered if he had wished it. It was again put to him by his wife, who waited for him in the street to tell him through her tears all the evil-bodings which a succession of Job's comforters had been pouring into her ears since the news of the probable dissolution of the strike had got wind. “ What

do you think of doing, I wonder?" was still the burden of her wail.

"Do you know that man?" replied her husband, pointing to a wasted and decrepit man who was selling matches; "that man was once a well-paid spinner. He lost his health in his employment, and now, at forty years of age, is selling matches from door to door. He has submitted to God's will. I too will submit to sell matches, if it be God's will that I should lose my good name as innocently as that man has lost his health."

"I told you how it would be. I told you—" cried Mary.

"I too foresaw it, Mary, and prepared myself for much;—but not for all."

He reproached her no further for the injury she had done to his good name than by declaring his unalterable will that not an article should be purchased by her beyond a bare supply of daily food till the clothes were bought back again and restored to the Committee, or their full value, if they could not be recovered.

CHAPTER XII.

HOPE EXTINGUISHED.

THERE had been a lingering hope among some who would fain have stood out longer, that this day's post would have brought the wherewithal

to build up new expectations and prolong the struggle. The wiser ones had resolved that not even the receipt of 200*l.* should shake their determination to return to work; but there was no question about the matter, for no money came.—A prodigious amount of business was done in the few hours preceding the final meeting. The masters met and settled that they would give no more than the medium wages,—that is, the rate given by Wentworth; Elliot carelessly consenting to lower his, and Mortimer being with difficulty persuaded to raise his. Rowe was consulted only as a matter of form, and the other firms had to make slight differences or none at all. They agreed to yield the point of their men belonging to the Union, since it appeared vain to contest it while of importance, and needless when not so.—The men settled that they must agree to a medium rate of wages, and make what they could of having obtained an equalization, such as it was, and of being permitted to adhere to the Union.—Clack agitated for his own private interest,—to get himself appointed to some salaried office in the Union, as he was no more likely to obtain employment from the masters than Allen.—So much was settled beforehand as to leave little to be done at the meeting but to make a public declaration of agreement.

With dark countenances and lagging steps the people came,—not in proud procession, with banners and music and a soldier-like march, but in small parties or singly, dropping into the track from by-streets and lanes, and looking as if they

were going to punishment rather than to consultation. There was a larger proportion than usual of ragged women and crying babies; for, as the women had been all along opposed to the strike, they were sensible of a feeling of mournful triumph in seeing it dissolved. Bray was present, without his pipe and his bells, for this was no time for lively music; but he carried his drum to be used as a signal for silence if the speakers should find any difficulty in obtaining a hearing. He beat a roll between each proposition submitted and agreed to; and thus did his last service to the turn-out he had watched from its commencement.

Proposed:—That as the masters are represented to be inclined to concession, the men shall do their part towards promoting an adjustment of their differences, agreeing to take such and such a rate of wages, provided that the masters pay all alike, and that the men be not disturbed in their peaceable adherence to the Union.—Agreed.

Proposed: that the men shall set apart a portion of their weekly earnings, as soon as able to do so, and in proportion to the size of their families, in order to liquidate the debt incurred on account of the strike now about to be closed.—Murmurs.

Allen came forward to state the gross amount of subscriptions and expenses, intimating that the account-books would be left at the Committee-room for one month, open to the inspection of all who could prove themselves to belong

to the Union. It would be seen through what unavoidable circumstances a debt had been incurred, and how essential it was to the honour of the body that it should be liquidated as soon as possible.

No reasonable exception could be made to any of the items of expenditure. The people could only wonder that there should be such crowds of children to receive pay, so many lying-in women to be relieved, so many sick persons to be aided, and so much to pay for printing and advertising. They could not deny that the expenses of the Committee had been very small.

This explanation finished, Allen's part was done. He had neither faults of his own nor favours of theirs to acknowledge. He spoke not of himself, but, when he had rendered his account, gravely made his bow and retired.

Clack then came forward, and, supported by a powerful party of friends near the waggon, succeeded in obtaining the public ear. With more success than delicacy, he enlarged upon his public services, pleaded his betrothment to one who was now suffering under the persecution of the masters, as a title to their support, as well as the certainty that he should not again be employed by any firm in Manchester. He declared that were it only through zeal for their rights, he would marry Ann Howlett as soon as she came out of prison——

“If she will have you,” cried somebody; and the crowd laughed.

Clack repeated his declaration without noticing

the doubt, and moreover declared his willingness to travel into every county in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in behalf of the Union. He boasted of his connexions in all places, and pointed out the wisdom there would be in employing him as a missionary of the Union, in preparation for any future struggle.—This proposal went a degree too far in impudence, or Clack might, perhaps, have gained his object; for he seemed to have recovered his hold on the people in proportion as that of better men had been weakened. A plain statement from the Committee that, as they were in debt, they had no power at present to appoint a missionary, served, however, to disappoint Clack's hopes. He skilfully laid hold of the words "at present," and left it an understood matter between himself and the people that the office was to be his by and by.

Within half an hour, not a trace of the meeting was left but the trampled grass and the empty waggon. The people seemed to try who could flee the fastest, some to obtain the first access to the masters, some to get out of sight of a scene which had become disagreeable, and some few to talk big at the Spread-Eagle of what might have happened if this cowardly Committee would but have stood out a little longer.

Allen's steps were directed to Mr. Wentworth's counting-house. "I will ask work of him and of him only, in this line," thought he. "If I fail, I must take to some other occupation. They can hardly be all shut against an honest man."

"I am sorry for you, Allen," was Mr. Wentworth's reply when, with some difficulty, Allen had made his way through a crowd of people on the same errand with himself. "But you shall pronounce upon the case yourself. I can employ now only two-thirds of the number who turned out from me. Of these, at least half left me unwillingly, and have therefore the first title to employment; and the rest have worked for my firm for many years. At the best, I must refuse many whose services I should be glad to keep; judge then whether I can take on a stranger, be he who he may."

Allen bowed and had no more to say.

"If the firm you worked under cannot take you on, I fear you have little chance, Allen; for all are circumstanced like myself, I believe."

Allen shook his head, and would trespass no longer on Mr. Wentworth's time.

In the street he met Bray, who was looking for him to say farewell, while Hannah was doing the same to little Martha. Where were they going, and why so soon?

There was nothing to stay for now, Bray thought; for he had no liking to see honest men stand idle in the labour-market, except by their own choice. Choice made the entire difference in the case. As for where he was going,—he and Hannah must find out where people were most fond of street music and dancing, and would pay the best for it. And this put him in mind of what he had to say. He was as much obliged as Hannah herself, and more, by the

hospitality with which she had been received at Allen's house; but his friend could not suppose he meant his daughter to be any charge upon the family in times like these. On this account, and for old friendship's sake, and from the sympathy which one proscribed man should feel for another, he hoped Allen would do him the favour to pocket this little bit of paper and say no more about it.—Allen agreed so far as to defer saying much about it till better times should come. He only just told Bray that the bank note was most acceptable at present for a very particular purpose, wrung his friend's hand, and ran home to fetch his wife, that the suit of clothes might be rebought without loss of time. They proved a dear bargain; but that was a secondary consideration, poor as Allen was. He went to rest that night, satisfied that his honour was redeemed, and that his wife would scarcely venture to put it in pawn again.

His wife said to herself that she had no idea he could have been so stern as he was all this day; she scarcely knew him for William Allen.—Many people made the same observation from this time forward. His sternness only appeared when matters of honour were in question, and no one who knew by what means he had been made jealous on this point wondered at the tone of decision in which a once weak and timid man could speak. But there were other circumstances which made them scarcely able to believe him the same William Allen. He no longer touched his hat to the masters, or appeared to

see them as they passed. He no longer repaired to the Spread-Eagle to hear or tell the news, or to take part in consultation on the affairs of the workmen of Manchester, though he was ever ready to give his advice with freedom and mildness when called upon. He stated that he was a friend to their interests, and therefore anxious to avoid injuring them by being one of the body. He would not even represent his children, who grew up one after another to be employed in the factories, while their father toiled in the streets with his water-cart in summer and his broom in winter; enduring to be pointed out to strangers as the leader of an unsuccessful strike, as long as his family were not included with himself in the sentence of proscription.

When will it be understood by all that it rests with all to bring about a time when opposition of interests shall cease? When will masters and men work cheerfully together for their common good, respect instead of proscribing each other, and be equally proud to have such men as Wentworth and William Allen of their fellowship?

*Summary of Principles illustrated in this
Volume.*

COMMODITIES, being produced by capital and labour, are the joint property of the capitalist and labourer.

The capitalist pays in advance to the labourers their share of the commodity, and thus becomes its sole owner.

The portion thus paid is **WAGES**.

REAL WAGES are the articles of use and consumption that the labourer receives in return for his labour.

NOMINAL WAGES are the portion he receives of these things reckoned in money.

The fund from which wages are paid in any country consists of the articles required for the use and consumption of labourers which that country contains

THE PROPORTION OF THIS FUND RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUALS MUST MAINLY DEPEND ON THE NUMBER AMONG WHOM THE FUND IS DIVIDED

The rate of wages in any country depends, therefore, not on the wealth which that country contains, but on the proportion between its capital and its population.

As population has a tendency to increase

faster than capital, wages can be prevented from falling to the lowest point only by adjusting the proportion of population to capital.

The lowest point to which wages can be permanently reduced is that which affords a bare subsistence to the labourer.

The highest point to which wages can be permanently raised is that which leaves to the capitalist just profit enough to make it worth his while to invest his capital.

The variations of the rate of wages between these extreme points depending mainly on the supply of labour offered to the capitalist, the rate of wages is mainly determined by the sellers, not the buyers of labour.

Combinations of labourers against capitalists (whatever other effects they may have) cannot secure a permanent rise of wages unless the supply of labour falls short of the demand ;—in which case, strikes are usually unnecessary.

Nothing can permanently affect the rate of wages which does not affect the proportion of population to capital.

Legislative interference does not affect this proportion, and is therefore useless.

Strikes affect it only by wasting capital, and are therefore worse than useless.

Combinations may avail or not, according to the reasonableness of their objects.

Whether reasonable or not, combinations are

not subjects for legislative interference; the law having no cognizance of their causes.

Disturbance of the peace being otherwise provided against, combinations are wisely therefore now left unregarded by the law.

The condition of labourers may be best improved,—

1st. By inventions and discoveries which create capital.

2d. By husbanding instead of wasting capital:—for instance by making savings instead of supporting strikes.

3d. BY ADJUSTING THE PROPORTION OF POPULATION TO CAPITAL.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.



No. VIII.

COUSIN MARSHALL.

A Tale.

By HARRIET MARTINEAU.

SECOND EDITION.

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LONDON :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke-Street, Lambeth.

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COUSIN MARSHALL.

CHAPTER I.

A VERY HOT MORNING.

THE gray light of a summer's morning was dawning on the cathedral towers of the city of ———, when Mr. Burke, a surgeon, returned on horseback from the country, where he had been detained by a patient till past midnight. It was Sunday morning, and he was therefore less surprised than grieved to see what kind of people they were who still loitered in the streets, and occasionally disturbed the repose of those who slept after their weekly toils. Here and there lay on a door-step, or in the kennel, a working man, who had spent his week's wages at the ale-house, and on being turned out when the clock struck twelve, had sunk down in a drunken sleep. Farther on were more of the same class, reeling in the middle of the street, or holding by the walls of the houses, with just sense enough to make their way gradually homewards, where their wives were either watching anxiously, or disturbed with miserable dreams on their account. The sound of the horse's hoofs on the pavement

roused the watchmen, of whom one rubbed his eyes, and came out of his box to learn the hour from the church clock, while another began to make a clearance of the tipplers, bidding them move on with threats which were lost upon their drowsy ears. One of these guardians of the night, however, was too far gone in slumber to be roused like the rest. Perhaps his own snoring prevented his hearing that any one passed by. Mr. Burke tickled this man's ear with his riding whip, and asked him the meaning of certain clouds of dun smoke which were curling up, apparently at some little distance, between the gazers and the pale eastern sky. The watchman's wit served him just so far as to suggest that there ought to be no smoke in that direction at this hour of a Sunday morning, and that he supposed smoke must come from fire. Upon this hint, Mr. Burke rode off at full trot, through such byways as would lead him most directly to the spot. Before he got there, however, his fears were confirmed by the various methods in which information of a fire is given. Rattles were sprung in quick succession, shouts and whoops were echoed from street to street, a red blaze was reflected from every chimney, and glittered like the setting sun on the windows of the upper stories, and the clangor of bells followed in less time than could have been supposed possible. Window after window was thrown up, as Mr. Burke passed, and night-capped heads popped out with the incessant inquiry—"Fire! Where?"

This was what Mr. Burke was as anxious as any one to know, and he therefore increased his speed till he arrived on the spot, and found that it was not a dwelling-house, but a large grocery warehouse, that was in flames. Having satisfied himself that no lives were in danger, and that every one was on the alert, he hastened homewards to deposit his horse, and quiet his sister's alarms, and returned to give assistance.

When he came back, two or three engines were on the spot, but unable to work from a deficiency of water. The river was not far distant; but so many impediments arose from the disposition of some of the crowd to speculate idly on the causes of the fire, and of others to bustle about without doing any good, that the flames were gaining ground frightfully. As more gentlemen arrived, however, they assisted Mr. Burke in his exertions to form two lines down to the river side, by one of which the full, and by the other the empty buckets might be passed with regularity and speed. Meanwhile, the crowd felt themselves at liberty to crack their jokes, as nothing but property was yet at stake.

A child clapped its hands in glee, as a pale blue flame shot up where there had been no light before.

"That's rum," said a man. "If there be raisins beside it, 'tis a pity we are not near enough to play snap-dragon."

"There will be a fine treat for the little ones when all is cool again," observed another. "A fine store of lollipops under the ruins. Look

how the hogsheads of sugar light one after another, like so many torches ! ”

“ They say tea is best made of river water,” said a third ; “ and it can’t but boil in such a fire ; so suppose you fetch your tea-service, neighbour.”

“ Rather tea than beer,” replied another. “ Did you taste the beer from the brewery fire ? Pah ! ’twas like what sea-water will be when the world is burnt.”

“ I missed my share then,” answered the neighbour ; “ but I got two or three gallons of what was let out because the white-washer’s boy was drowned in it. That was none the worse, that I could find out. My wife was squeamish about it, so I had it all to myself. Heydav ! what’s this about ? Why, they won’t let a man look on in peace ! ”

The constables were now vigorously clearing a space for the firemen, as there was some apprehension that the flames were spreading backwards, where there were courts and alleys crowded with dwellings of the poor. The fear was soon perceived to be too well founded. From an arched passage close by the burning building there presently issued a half-dressed woman with two children clinging to her, a third girl shivering and crying just behind, and a boy following with his arms full of clothes and bedding. Mr. Burke was with them instantly.

“ Have the houses behind caught fire ? ”

“ Ours has, sir ; and it can’t be saved, for there is no way to it but this. Not a thing could

we get out but what we have on; but, thank God, we are all safe!"

"O, mammy, mammy!" cried the elder girl, "she has not been out of bed this week, sir. She'll die with cold."

Mr. Burke had observed the ghastly look of the woman. He now bade her compose herself, and promised that the children should be taken care of, if she would tell him where she wished to go. She answered doubtfully that her sister lived in the next street.

"O, not there, mother!" said the boy. "Let us go to John Marshall's."

"'Tis too far, Ned. My sister will surely take us in at such a time as this. Lord have mercy! The flames dizzy one so!"

And the poor woman fell against the wall. Mr. Burke raised her, and bidding Ned go before to show the way, he half led and half carried her the short distance to her sister's house, the little ones running barefooted, holding by the skirts of his coat. On their way, they met a man whom the children proclaimed with one voice to be John Marshall.

"I was coming to you," said he, supporting the widow Bridgeman on the other side. "This is a sad plight I see you in, cousin; but cheer up! If you can get as far as our place, my wife bids me say you will be kindly welcome."

Mr. Burke thought the nearest resting-place was the best; and Marshall yielded, hoping the sister's door would be open, as it ought. It was but half open, and in that half stood the sister,

Mrs. Bell, arguing with Ned that the place was too small for her own family, and that his mother would be more comfortable elsewhere, and so forth. Mr. Burke cut short the argument by pushing a way, and depositing his charge upon the bed within. He then gave his name to the amazed Mrs. Bell, desired her to lend the children some clothing, and to keep her sister quiet till he should come again, sent Marshall for his wife, who would apparently nurse the widow Bridgeman better than her own sister, and then returned with Ned to see if any of the widow's little furniture could be saved. Before they reached the spot, however, the tenement was burnt to the ground, and the two or three next to it were pulled down to stop the fire, so that nothing more was to be done.

The widow seemed at first so much revived by the treatment which Mr. Burke ordered, and her cousin Marshall administered, that there was room for hope that the shock would leave her little worse than it found her; and the benevolent surgeon went home at six o'clock to refresh himself, bearing tidings to his sister, not only that the fire was extinguished, but that it appeared to have done no irreparable mischief beyond the destruction of property. He was not fully aware, however, in how weak a state his patient had previously been.

"Mammy!" said little Ann Bridgeman, who sat on a low stool, with a blue apron of her aunt's over her shoulders, her only covering except her shift, "Mammy, there goes the church bell."

"Hush!" said Jane, the eldest, who was more considerate.

"Mammy is awake," persisted Ann, looking again into the curtainless bed to see that the widow's eyes were open. "Do you hear the bell, mammy? And we cannot go to church."

"'Tis a strange Sunday, indeed, my child," replied the mother. "When I prayed last night, after all our work was done, that this might be a day of rest, I little thought what would happen."

Her cousin, Mrs. Marshall, came to her and begged that she would try to rest, and not to trouble herself with uneasy thoughts.

"My mind is so tossed about!" replied the poor woman. "It distracts me to think what we are to do next. And there sit the poor children without so much as a petticoat to wear; and the room is all as if the fire was roaring about me; and a letter from my husband, the only one I ever had, that I thought to have carried to my grave with me, is burned; and I might as well have saved it, if I had had a minute's thought; and——"

The sick woman burst into a hysterical cry which shook her frame so, that her cousin began to think how she could calm her. She ventured on a bold experiment when she found that her patient's talk still ran upon the letter, and that the consolations of Mrs. Bell, who now came to the bedside, only made the matter worse.

"Well now, I wonder," said Mrs. Bell, "that you should trouble yourself so about a letter, when you will be sure to remember what is in it. One

would think it was a bank note by the way you cry after it."

"A bank note!" cried the poor woman. "I would have set light to my house with a handful of bank notes, if I had had them, sooner than lose that letter; and yet nobody would think so by the way I left it behind me. There it was in the box with my rent, and with my mother's gold thimble, nigh at hand as I got out of bed, and I might just as well have saved it. O Lord! what a wretch I am!" she cried. "Take the children away! Don't let them come near me any more. Lord forgive me! Lord have mercy upon me!" and she raved fearfully.

"She's out of her senses," said Mrs. Bell, "and all for that trumpery letter. I'll make her believe we have found it."

"And so make her worse than ever when she discovers the trick," said Mrs. Marshall. "No, that won't do." And she turned to the sick woman,—“I say, Mary, you would not mind so much about the letter if you were to see your husband very soon, would you?”

"Surely no," replied the widow, looking perplexed, but immediately calm. "But my husband is gone, long ago, is not he? But perhaps I am going too. Is that what you mean, cousin Marshall?"

"I don't know whether you be or no, Mary; but you have no strength for raving as you did just now. If you wish to live for your children's sake, you must be quiet."

"I was thinking a deal about dying last

night, and what was to become of the children ; but I forgot all about it to-day. Poor things ! they have no friends but you two," looking from Mrs. Bell to her cousin Marshall. " You will see to them, I am sure. You will not cast them out upon the world ; and depend upon it, it will be repaid to you. I will pray God day and night, just as I would here, to watch over them and reward those that are kind to them ; particularly whichever of you takes Sally ; for I am much afraid Sally will go blind." As she gazed earnestly in the faces of her relations, Mrs. Bell tried to put her off with bidding her make her mind easy, and trust in Providence, and hope to live. Her cousin Marshall did better.

" I will take charge of Sally and of one of the others," said she. " I promise it to you ; and you may trust my promise, because my husband and I have planned it many a time when we saw what a weakly way you were in. They shall be brought up like our own children, and you know how that is."

" God bless you for ever, cousin ! And as for the other two——"

" Leave that to me," replied Mrs. Marshall, who saw that the patient's countenance began to resume its unsettled expression. " Leave it all to me, and trust to my promise."

" Just one thing more," said the widow, starting up as her cousin would have retired. " Dear me ! how confused my head is,—and all because you have moved the bed opposite the window, which my head never could bear. Listen

now. In the cupboard on the left side the bed,—at least, that is where it was,—you will find a japanned box that I keep my rent in. At the bottom of that box there is a letter——”

“ Well, well, Mary. That will do by-and-by.”

“ Let me finish, cousin. Give that letter to Ned, and bid him keep it, because——”

“ Aye, I understand. Because it is his father’s writing, and the only one you ever had.”

“ Why, you know all about it!” exclaimed the widow, smiling, with a look of surprise. “ I did not know I had ever told anybody. Well, now, I can’t keep awake any longer ; but be sure you wake me in time in the morning. I must be up to wash the children’s things, for they want them sadly.”

She dropped asleep instantly when her cousin had hung a shawl at the foot of the bed to hide the strange window. Ned had gone some minutes before for Mr. Burke, who pronounced, on seeing her, that she would probably never wake again. This proved true ; and before night she was no more.

The fire created a great sensation in the city. The local newspapers described it as the most awful that had occurred in the place within the memory of man ; and the London prints copied from them. Strangers came in from the country to visit the smoking ruins, and the firm to whom the warehouses belonged were almost overwhelmed with sympathy and offers of assistance. Mrs. Bell was disposed to make a profit out of all this. She would have stationed Ned, in a

tattered shirt, on the ruins of his mother's dwelling to beg, and have herself carried about a petition in behalf of the orphan children. The funeral, at least, ought, she thought, to be paid for by charity; but there was no moving the Marshalls on any of these points. They were so sure that the widow would have died, at all events, in a very snort time, that they could not see why the fire should throw the expense of her funeral on the public; and even Mrs. Bell could not pretend that anything of much value had been lost in the fire except the rent, which would never be called for. The Marshalls countenanced Ned's dislike to go near the idle boys who were practising leaping on the ruins, and found it a far more natural and pleasant thing to dress the little Bridgemans in some of their own children's clothes and take them home, than to appeal to strangers on their behalf.

"You may do as you please, neighbour," cried Mrs. Bell, after an argument upon this subject. "If you choose to burden yourselves with two children in addition to your own five, it is no concern of mine; only don't expect me to put any such dead-weight upon my husband's neck."

"Your husband earns better wages than mine, Mrs. Bell."

"And that is what makes me wonder at your folly in not sending the children to the workhouse at once. No need to tell me what a little way a man's wages go in families like yours and mine."

"You have a good deal of help in other ways

to make out with, indeed, neighbour," observed Mrs. Marshall. "You have found the gentry very kind to you this year; so much so that I think the least you can do is to keep these children from being a burden on the rates, for the little time till they can shift for themselves.—I believe you bought neither coals nor blankets last winter."

"Bless your heart, cousin, the coals we got did not last half the winter through; for my husband likes a good fire when he can get it, and always expected to find one in the grate when he came home from the Leopard, however late at night it might be; and I had to sell one of the blankets presently. The other, on the bed there, is the only one we have till winter, when I hope to get a new one, if the ladies are not too particular about my having had two already. But, really, it tries one's patience to wait upon them ladies. Do you know I am disappointed again about the bag of linen against my confinement. I may be down any day now, and every bag is engaged, so that they can't promise with any certainty. So I must just take my chance for getting through somehow."

"And how is your baby provided?"

"O, they gave me a few trifles for it, which will do till I get about again, and can carry it to show how poorly it is off."

"Well," said Mrs. Marshall, "I do wonder you can bear to live from hand to mouth in that way. You got your first set of baby-linen at the same time that I did, and with your own money ;

and why yours should not have lasted as well as mine, I can't think. Mine are not all worn out yet, and I always managed to replace, by timely saving, those that were. However, if you can't clothe your own children, I don't wonder so much that you will not feed your sister's. Poor things! must they go to the workhouse?"

"Unless you choose to take them all, cousin. So wonderful a manager as you are, perhaps you might contrive it."

Mrs. Marshall shook her head mournfully. She had not lodging room for more than two girls among her own, and could not have engaged that her husband's rent should be ready if more than two in addition were to share their daily meals. As it was, they must give up one dish of meat a week, and make some other reductions of the same kind.

"Better ask the gentry to help you, at once," said Mrs. Bell; "but I suppose you are too proud?"

"We will try what our own charity can do before we ask it from those who have less concern in the matter," said Mrs. Marshall. "There is one thing I mean to ask, however, because I cannot anyhow get it for them myself; and that is, to have them taught like my own children. Poor Sally must learn to knit while she has some eyesight left."

"Which of the others do you mean to take?" enquired Mrs. Bell, as if quite unconcerned in the matter.

Mrs. Marshall called in the four children from

the next room to consult them, to her cousin's utter amazement. She told them the plain truth, —that she had promised their mother to take charge of two of them, and that one of the two should be Sally; that the other two must live in the workhouse till they could earn their own subsistence; and that she wished them to agree with her which had best remain with her and Sally. Ned looked at his aunt with tears in his eyes; to which she answered by promising to see him sometimes, and to bring him some gingerbread when she had a penny to spare. Ned, who was too old to be spoken to in this way, brushed his sleeve across his eye, and observed to cousin Marshall that Jane had better go with him to the workhouse, because she was the oldest and would be soonest out of it, and because Sally liked to have little Ann to do things for her that she could not see to do herself. Cousin Marshall was quite of this opinion; and so the matter was settled.

A long private conversation followed after Mrs. Bell had left the room; if conversation it might be called which consisted of sobs and tears on the part of the children, and exhortations and pity on that of their friend.

"Remember, Ned," said she, "the one thing you must be always thinking about after you go into the workhouse is how soon you can get out again. It is God's will that has taken your mother from you, and that has made your relations poor, and so we must try and not think your lot a disgrace; but it will be a disgrace if

you stay long. Keep this up in Jane's mind too, for I am afraid of her forgetting it, as she is rather giddy.—I am not sorry, Jane, to see you cry so much, because I hope it will make you remember this strange day. I have heard of workhouse frolics, my dear. Never let me hear of them from you. You will have a service, I hope, in a few years, and you must try to make yourself fit to live with a different sort of people from those you will find in the workhouse."

Mrs. Bell, who had come back in time to hear the last few words, began to tell all she had heard about the pleasant kind of life people might lead in a workhouse if they chose; but her cousin cut her short by bidding the children take leave at once.

Few events wrung tears from this stout-hearted woman; but she kept her apron to her eyes the whole way home, and could not speak to any body all day.

CHAPTER II.

AN INTERIOR.

MISS BURKE had gone into the country the morning after the fire, and remained some weeks. When she returned, she inquired of her brother what had become of the family who had been

burnt out. She was an occasional visitor at the workhouse school, and besides knew some of the elderly paupers, and went to see them now and then. Her visits were made as disagreeable as possible by the matron, who hated spies, as she declared, and had good reasons for doing so ; many practices going forward under her management which would not bear inspection. She was sometimes politic enough to keep out of sight, when she was aware that something wrong had already met the lady's eye ; but she more frequently confronted her near the entrance with such incivility as might, she hoped, drive her away without having seen anything. The master was an indolent, easy man, much afraid of the more disorderly paupers, and yet more of his wife. He seldom appeared to strangers till called for ; but was then quite disposed to make the best of everything, and to agree in all opinions that were offered. There was little more use, though less inconvenience, in pointing out abuses and suggesting remedies to him than to his wife ; yet Mr. Burke and his sister conscientiously persevered in doing this,—the gentleman from the lights he obtained in his office of surgeon to the workhouse infirmary, and the lady, from her brother's reports and her own observations.

Miss Burke's first inquiry at the workhouse gate was for nurse Rudrum. The porter's office consisted merely in opening the gate ; so that when the lady had entered the court, she had to make further search. The court was half-full of

people, yet two women were washing dirty linen at the pump in the midst. Several men were seated cutting pegs for the tilers and shoemakers, and others patching shoes for their fellow-paupers; while several women stood round with their knitting, laughing loud; and some of the younger ones venturing upon a few practical jokes more coarse than amusing. At a little distance, sat two young women shelling peas for a grand corporation dinner that was to take place the next day, and beside them stood a little girl whose business was apparently to clean a spit on which she was leaning, but who was fully occupied in listening to the conversation which went on over the pea-basket. This group looking the least formidable, Miss Burke approached to make her inquiry. Being unperceived, the conversation was carried on in the same loud tone till she came quite near, when one of the young women exclaimed,

“ I don't want to hear any more about it. I wonder you had the heart to do it.”

“ To do what ?” asked Miss Burke. “ Something that you do not look ashamed of,” she continued, turning to the first speaker.

“ Lord, no,” said the girl with a bold stare. “ It is only that a young mistress of mine, that died and left a child a week old, bade me see that it was taken care of till her husband came back, who was gone abroad; and I could not be troubled with the little thing, so I took it direct to the Foundling Hospital; and I heard that the father came home soon after, and the people at

the hospital could not the least tell which was his child, or whether it was one that had died. I kept out of the way, for I could not have helped them, and should only have got abused; for they say the young man was like one gone mad."

"And was it out of your own head that you took the child there, or who mentioned the hospital to you?"

"I knew enough about it myself," said the woman with a meaning laugh, "to manage the thing without asking any body. It is a fine place, that Foundling Hospital, as I have good reason to say."

"Pray find the matron," said Miss Burke to the little spit-cleaner, who was listening with open mouth; "and ask whether Miss Burke can be admitted to see nurse Rudrum. I think," she continued, when the little girl was out of hearing, "you might choose your conversation better in children's company."

"And in other people's company too," said the other sheller of peas. "I've not been used to such a place as this, and I can't bear it."

"You'll soon get used to it, Susan, my love," replied the bold one.

"Where do you come from, Susan, and why are you here?" inquired Miss Burke.

With many blushes, Susan told that she was a servant out of place, without friends and with no one to give her a character, her last master and mistress having gone off in debt and left her to be suspected of knowing of their frauds, though ad been so ignorant of them as not to have

attempted to secure her own wages. It was a hard case, and she did not know how to help herself; but she would submit to any drudgery to get out of the workhouse.

"And who are you?" said the lady to the other. "Are you a servant out of place too?"

"Yes."

"And without a character?"

"O yes, quite," said the woman with a laugh. "It is well for me that there are some places where characters don't signify so much as the parson tells us. Susan and I are on the same footing here."

Susan rose in an agony, and by mistake emptied the shelled peas in her lap among the husks.

"There! never mind picking them out again," said the other. "If I take such a trouble, it shall be for my own supper, when the rest are done."

"So you really think," said Miss Burke, "that you and Susan are on the same footing because you live under the same roof and sit on the same seat? I hope Susan will soon find that you are mistaken."

At this moment appeared Mrs. Wilkes the matron, shouting so that all the yard might hear.

"Is it nurse Rudrum you want? She is out of her mind and not in a state for prayer. Gentlemen are enough to send poor people out of their minds with praying and preaching."

“ I am not going either to pray or preach,” replied Miss Burke ; “ and you well know that it is some years since nurse Rudrum was in her right mind. I only ask the way to her.”

“ Yonder lies your way, madam. Only take care of the other mad people, that's all.”

Surprised and vexed to perceive Miss Burke persevering in her purpose, notwithstanding this terrifying warning, she continued,

“ Remember, if you please, that the doctors don't allow their patients to be made methodists of ; though God knows how many are sent here by the methodists. You'll please to take it all upon yourself, ma'am.”

Miss Burke, not seeing how all this concerned herself and nurse Rudrum, who were about equally far from methodism, pursued her way, as well as she could guess, to the right ward.— She could not easily miss it when once within hearing of nurse Rudrum's never-ceasing voice, or the tip tap of her ancient high-heeled shoes, which she was indulged in wearing, as it was a fancy not likely to spread. Nurse was employed as usual, pacing to and fro in the ward appropriated to the harmless insane, knitting as fast as her well-practised fingers would go, and talking about Jupiter.

“ Miss Burke, I declare,” cried she, as soon as her visitor appeared. “ You are welcome, as you always are—always very welcome ; but,” and she came nearer and looked very mysterious, “ you are come from them people at a distance,

I doubt. Now don't deny it if you be. If they have practised upon me, you didn't know it; so no need to deny it, you know."

"I am come from Mr. Earle's nurse; and Mr. Earle sent his love to you, and hopes you will accept some tea and sugar; and the young ladies will come and see you when they visit me, and in the meanwhile they have sent you a Sunday shawl."

A dozen curtseys, and "My duty to them, my duty and many thanks; and I dare say it is because they are so sorry about them people at a distance that practise upon my ancle, without so much as shaking their heads."

"O, your ancle! I was to ask particularly how your ancle is. You seem able to walk pretty briskly."

"That's to disappoint 'em, you see," and she laughed knowingly. "I only tell *you*, you know, so you'll be quiet. They can't touch me anywhere else, because of Jupiter in my cradle."

"What was that, nurse?"

"O that was when they made me a watch-planet; and a fine thing it was to keep me from harm,—all except my ancle, you see. It was Jupiter, you know; and I feel it all over me now sometimes,—most in my elbows. It was only Jupiter; none of the rest of them. That was my mother's doing; for Jupiter is the most religious of all the planets."

And so she ran on till her visiter interrupted her with questions about some of her companions in the ward.

“ Ay—a queer set for me to be amongst, a’n’t they? That poor man! Look at his sash;” and she giggled while she showed how a poor idiot was fastened by a leathern belt to a ring in the wall. “ He spins a good deal as it is; but if he could walk about, he would do nothing. He has no more sense than a child, and people of that sort are always for tramp, tramp, tramping from morning till night, till it wearies one’s ears to hear them.”

And nurse resumed her walk. When she returned to the same place, she went on,—

“ If these people could be made to hold their tongues, they would be better company; but you never heard such a clatter; they won’t hear one speak. That girl sings to her spinning-wheel the whole day long, and she has but one tune. They say I am growing deaf; but I’m sure I hear that song for ever, as much when she is not singing as when she is. But do you think that I am growing deaf, really now?”

Miss Burke could only say that when people got to nurse’s age, and so on.

“ Well now, ’tis only because of Jupiter,—listening as a watch-planet should, you know. You should have heard his music last night;—that that I used to sing to the little Earles, when master Charles was afraid to go to bed alone because of the ghost-story I told him; and I put him to bed in Miss Emma’s room for once, and nobody knew: so don’t tell my mistress, for she never forgave such a thing.”

Miss Burke smiled and sighed; for this master

Charles was now a man of forty, and Mrs. Earle had been in her grave nearly twenty years. As the visiter was about to take leave, nurse laid her hand on the lady's arm, drew up her tight little person to its best advantage, and gravely said,

"One thing more, Miss Burke. You will give me leave to ask why I am detained in this place, among idiots and dolts that are no companions for me? This is a poor reward for my long service, and so you may tell Mr. Earle."

"We hoped you had everything comfortable, nurse. You always seem in good spirits."

"Comfortable! You mean as to tea and sugar and shawls; but what is that compared with the company I keep? The Earles don't know what they miss by what they do. Many a time I would go and see them, and carry them a piece of gingerbread, if I was not prevented."

"Well, nurse, you shall come and see them at our house by and by. In the meanwhile,—you know the boys in the yard are very rude, and they are too apt to teaze old people. We think you are more comfortable out of their way."

Nurse still looked haughty and dissatisfied.

"Besides," continued Miss Burke, "watch-planets are not common, you know; and who knows how they might be treated in the world?"

"True, true, true," cried the delighted old woman. "There are but two in the world besides me, and they are at Canterbury, where my mother lived nurse twenty years. 'Tis or"

them that study the stars that bow before watch-planets. Well! we shall all study the stars up above, and then will be the time for us watch-planets."

So saying, nurse Rudrum returned to the track she had worn in the floor, and Miss Burke heard the well known pit pat all the way down stairs.

The lady now turned into the school, where she was equally welcome to mistress and scholars, especially after an absence of some duration, as now. The mistress, Mrs. Mott, was not exactly the person the ladies would have appointed to the office, if the choice had been left to them; but, all things considered, the appointment might have been worse filled. Mrs. Mott, a starched, grim-looking personage, had kept a dame school in a village for many years, during which time she had acquired a very high opinion of herself and her modes of tuition;—an opinion which she continued to instil into the guardians of the poor, by whom she was appointed to her present office; their choice being also aided by the consideration that Mrs. Mott must have parish assistance at all events, and might as well do something in exchange for it. The ladies who interested themselves about the children, seeing that the choice lay between having no school at all and having Mrs. Mott for a schoolmistress, made the best of the latter alternative.

When the lady entered, Mrs. Mott was doing what she rather prided herself upon,—carrying on two affairs at once. She was fixing work for the girls,—plying her needle as fast as possible

—and leading a hymn which the children sang after her, kneeling on their benches, with their hands clasped before them, and every little body rocking from side to side to mark the time. When it was over, and the children scrambled down into their seats, a universal grin of pleasure greeted Miss Burke from her old acquaintance, and a stare of wonder from the new comers who yet knew her only by reputation. Mrs. Mott, meanwhile, went on drawing out her thread most indefatigably, and murmuring as if under some emotion.

“Good morning, Mrs. Mott. It is some time since I saw you last.”

“Time, madam! Ay: time is given, time is given where all else is given. ’Tis ours to seize it ere it flies.”

“How are your family, Mrs. Mott? I hope your sons are doing better.”

“Son, madam, son! I suppose you don’t know that the Lord has made choice of Jack?”

Miss Burke was much concerned; and tried to hear the story notwithstanding a hubbub at the bottom of the school, which at length roused the teacher’s wrath.

“Tommy hit Jemmy,” was the reply of twenty little voices to the inquiry of what was the matter.

“Tommy is a bad boy and must be punished,” was the verdict; and the sentence speedily followed. “We are going to prayers, and I will have no disturbance while prayers are going on; but I will have justice. So, as soon as prayers

are over, Jemmy shall bite Tommy in whatever part he chooses."

Miss Burke considered how she might best interfere with the process without setting aside the mistress's authority. She waited till prayers were over, and then called the two boys before her. She represented to the sobbing culprit the enormity of biting human flesh, and then asked Jemmy if he had any urgent desire to bite Tommy.

"I don't want to bite him, unless I'm bid," was the reply.

"Very well; then, suppose you forgive him instead. This will make him very careful not to hurt you another time. Will it not, Tommy?"

Tommy agreed, and words instead of wounds were exchanged.

The next inquiry was for the Bridgemans. Ned was called out of the ranks of departing schoolboys, and Jane was sent for, being detained from school this day to help to prepare for the corporation dinner. On her appearance, she was recognized as the cleaner of spits, who had listened so eagerly to the praises of the Foundling Hospital. Miss Burke told them how she had heard of their circumstances, and her intention to visit them from time to time. She asked them if they were happy.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Jane, readily; "a deal happier than we thought."

Ned, however, only bit his lip to keep back his tears. Miss Burke framed her speech to suit both.

"You know," she said, "that we all consider

that you are here only for a time, and we trust a short time. It has pleased God to take from you your natural protectors and teachers; and children like you must be taken care of, and taught, before you can find a way in the world. But, if you choose, you may soon make yourselves fit for a better and a happier place than this; and the more cheerfully you set about it, Ned, the more quickly you will learn. You, Jane, should seek out the more sober and quiet young women to talk to, instead of listening to the foolish gossip that goes on in the yard. Has Susan been kind to you?"

"She always keeps by herself when she can, ma'am."

"She will be kind to you, however, I am sure, if you deserve it; and I believe she can teach you many things you will like to learn."

In order to unloose Ned's tongue, the lady made several inquiries about their comforts. They had nothing to complain of but that they did not like milk-broth, which composed their dinner twice a week, and that the workhouse dress was very hot and heavy. The first evil could not be helped—the other seemed very reasonable; and Miss Burke determined to urge an objection to it through her brother, as it appeared that a thick woollen dress was the most liable to dirt of any that could be fixed upon, and the most unseemly when worn into holes; besides this, the children were exposed to colds from the temptation to throw off the dress when heated, and from exchanging it for their own

old clothes on Sundays and holidays. Jane had, as her brother declared, been scarcely ever without colds since she entered the workhouse, as cousin Marshall had been kind enough to provide her with a complete suit on her entrance, which Jane was fond of wearing whenever she went to church, or to the gardens, or——”

“To the gardens! What gardens?”

The public tea-gardens, where the girls and boys were treated very often on Sundays, sometimes under guidance, and sometimes without any. Jane was very eloquent in describing these frolics, and others which took place within the walls.

Miss Burke had little hope of counteracting such influences as these by an occasional visit; but she now said what she thought most likely to impress the mind of the poor girl, and then proceeded to find Susan, in order to recommend Jane to her care. She was glad to see Wilkes, the master, unaccompanied by his wife, and conversing with a gentleman whom she knew to be one of the visitors. Before she reached them, she perceived that Ned was following her with a wistful look.

“Have you any thing more to say to me?” she inquired.

“Only, ma’am, that perhaps you may know when we may get out. I should like to see the time when we shall get out.”

“I wish I could tell you, my dear boy; but I can only guess, like you. I guess it will be when Jane is fit for service, and you for labour in the fields or elsewhere.”

“ I can labour now,” said the boy, brightening. “ If they would try me, I am sure I could dig all day.”

“ Be patient, Ned ; and then, if you turn out a clever workman when the right time comes, who knows but you may not only keep out of the workhouse yourself, but prevent somebody else from coming in ?”

Ned smiled, pulled his forelock, and went away cheered.

Mr. Nugent, the visitor, met Miss Burke with an observation on the improvement of workhouses which rendered them accessible to female benevolence ; whereas they were once places where no lady could set her foot. Miss Burke gravely replied that there was much yet for benevolence to do. The necessary evils of a workhouse were bad enough ; and it was afflicting to see them needlessly aggravated,—to see poverty and indigence confounded, and blameless and culpable indigence, temporary distress, and permanent destitution, all mixed up together, and placed under the same treatment. These distinctions were somewhat too nice for the gentleman’s perceptions ; at least, while announced in abstract terms. He stood in an attitude of perplexed attention, while Wilkes asked whether she would have the paupers live in separate dwellings.

Miss Burke observed that the evil began out of the workhouse ; and that the want of proper distinctions there made classification in the house an imperative duty.

"We are too apt," she said, "to regard all the poor alike, and to speak of them as one class, whether or not they are dependent; that is, whether they are indigent or only poor. There must always be poor in every society; that is, persons who can live by their industry, but have nothing beforehand. But that there should be able-bodied indigent, that is, capable persons who cannot support themselves, is a disgrace to every society, and ought to be so far regarded as such as to make us very careful how we confound the poor and the indigent."

"I assure you, ma'am," said Wilkes, "it grieves me very much to see honest working men, or sober servants out of place, come here to be mixed up with rogues and vagabonds."

"But they are all indigent alike," observed Mr. Nugent, "or your honest labourers would not have to come here."

"All indigent certainly, sir; but not all alike. We have had cottagers here for a time, after losing cows and pigs by accident; and even little farmers after a fire on their premises; and labourers, when many hundreds were turned off at once from the public works. Now, this sort of indigence is very different from that which springs out of vice."

"It seems to me," said Miss Burke, "that as wide a distinction ought to be made between temporary and lasting indigence, and between innocent and guilty indigence, within the workhouse, as between poverty and indigence out of it; and as the numbers are, I believe, very un-

equal, I should think it might easily be done. I suppose, Mr. Wilkes, those who require permanent support, the invalids and the thoroughly depraved, are few in comparison with those who come in and go out again after a time."

"Very few indeed, ma'am. Mr. Nugent knows that our numbers are for ever varying. One year we may have seven hundred in the house, and another year not so much as three hundred. It seems to me the surest way of making the industrious into vagabonds, and the sober into rogues, to mix them all up together; to say nothing of the corruption to the children."

"I heard the other day," said Mr. Nugent, "that few of the children who have been brought up here turn out well. But it can't be helped, madam. The plan of out-door pay must have its limits, and our building a new house for the moral or immoral, is out of the question in the present state of the funds. The rate has increased fearfully of late, as your brother will tell you. I confess I do not see what is to become of the system altogether, if we go on as we have been doing for the last five years."

Miss Burke observed that she was far from wishing to urge any new expenses. She rather believed that much money would be saved by enabling the industrious to pursue their employments undisturbed, and by keeping the young and well-disposed out of the contagion of bad example. She pointed out the case of Susan as one of great hardship, and that of little Jane as one of much danger. Wilkes confirmed the fact of Susan being a good girl, and a well-

qualified servant, and told that the other woman had been discharged from various services for theft and other crimes.

Mr. Nugent, who, in the midst of his talk about improvement, disliked trouble and innovation, related that an attempt at classification had once been made by building a wall across the yard, to separate the men and women; but that the wall had been pulled down in a riot of the paupers, after which it was considered too formidable an undertaking to rebuild it.

Miss Burke thought, on her way home, that classification must begin among the guardians of the poor, before much reformation could be looked for. The intrepid and active among the gentlemen, if separated from the fearful and indolent, might carry the day against the ill-conducted paupers; but such a result was scarcely to be hoped while the termagant Mrs. Wilkes monopolized all authority within the walls, and the majority of the guardians insisted on the let-alone plan of policy being pursued; a plan under which everything was let alone but the rates, which increased formidably from year to year.

CHAPTER III.

TEA AND TALK.

MR. BURKE came in earlier than usual this evening, the first time since his sister's return that he could enjoy her society in peace. When he ar-

rived wet and chilly from a stormy ride, and found a little fire, just enough for a rainy summer's evening, burning brightly in the grate, the tea apparatus prepared, his slippers set ready, his study gown awaiting him, and a pile of new medical books laid within reach, as if to offer him the choice of reading or conversation, he wished within himself that Louisa would leave home no more till he was married, if that time should ever come. This wish was pardonable; for he was, to use his own expression, so accustomed to be spoiled by his sister that he scarcely knew what comfort was while she was away.

"Any notes or messages for me, Louisa?" he inquired, before resigning himself to his domestic luxuries.

"Alas, yes!" she replied, handing him two or three from their appointed receptacle.

"These will all do to-morrow," he cried; "so make tea while I change my coat:" a direction which was gladly obeyed. On his return he flung the books on a distant table, stretched himself out with feet on fender, coaxed his dog with one hand, and stirred his steaming cup with the other.

"I wish I were a clergyman," were his first words.

"To have parsonage comforts without getting wet through in earning them, I suppose," said Louisa, laughing.

"You are far from the mark, Louisa."

Louisa made many guesses, all wrong, about

capricious patients, provoking consulting physicians, unpaid bills, jealous competitors, and other causes of annoyance.

"No, no, dear. It is a deeper matter than any of these. The greatest question now moving in the world is, 'What is charity?'"

"Alas, yes! And who can answer it? Johnson gave a deficient answer, and Paley a wrong one; and who can wonder that multitudes make mistakes after them?"

"A clergyman, Louisa, a wise clergyman who discerns times and seasons, may set many right; and God knows how many need it! He will not follow up a text from Paul with a definition from Johnson and an exhortation from Paley. He will not suppose because charity once meant alms-giving, that it means it still; or that a kind-hearted man must be right in thinking kindness of heart all-sufficient, whether its manifestation be injurious or beneficial. He will not recommend keeping the heart soft by giving green gooseberries to a griped child,—as he might fairly do if he carried out Paley's principle to its extent."

"A professional illustration," replied Louisa. "You want me to carry it on unto the better charity of giving the child bitter medicine. But, brother, let the clergyman preach as wisely and benignantly as he may, why should you envy him? Cannot you, do not you, preach as eloquently by example?"

"That is the very thing," replied her brother.

"I am afraid my example preaches against my principles.—O, dear, if it was but as easy to know how to do right as to do it!"

"What can have wounded your conscience to-day?" replied Louisa. "You are generally as ready in applying principles as decided in acting upon them: What can have placed you in a new position since morning?"

"Nothing: but my eyes are more opened to that in which I already stood; and really, Louisa, it is a very questionable one. I will tell you.—I am a medical officer of various charities which would be good if benevolent intention and careful management could make them so, but of the tendency of which I think very ill. The question is, whether I am not doing more harm than good by officiating at the Dispensary and Lying-in Hospital, while it is clear to me that the absence of these charities would be an absence of evil to society?"

"You must remember, brother, that your secession would have no other effect than to put another medical officer in your place. I am afraid you are not yet of consequence enough," laughing, "to show that these institutions must stand or fall with you."

"That argument of yours, Louisa, has done long and good service to many a bad cause. I can allow it no more weight with me than with a discontented Catholic in good old Luther's days. No: my plea to my own doubts has hitherto been that my office gave me the opportunity of promoting my own views both among

the benefactors and the poor; but I begin to think I may do so much more effectually by resigning my office in those charities which I consider to be doing harm, openly stating my reasons, of course."

"Have you long meditated this, brother?"

"Yes, for several months; but a particular circumstance has roused my attention to-day. These anniversary times always disgust me,—these stated periods for lauding the benevolent and exhibiting the benefited. I am sure the annual dinner would be better attended by the subscribers to the Dispensary, for instance, if the custom of parading round the room as many of the patients as could be got hold of were discontinued. But it is the matter of fact of the Report, and the way in which it is viewed by the patrons, that has startled me to-day. I was referred to, as usual, by the secretary and one or two more for information respecting certain classes of patients, and I was shown the Report which is to be read after dinner to-morrow. You will scarcely guess what is the principal topic of congratulation in it."

"That Lord B—— takes the chair to-morrow, perhaps? Now, do not look angry, but let me guess again. That the subscriptions have increased?"

"Aim in an opposite direction, and you will hit it."

"That the funds are insufficient? Can this be it?"

"Just so. The number of patients has in-

creased so much, that a further appeal is made to the public in behalf of this admirable charity, which has this year relieved just double the number it relieved ten years ago."

"I thought," said Louisa, "that its primary recommendation, ten years ago, was that it was to lessen the amount of sickness among the poor."

"True," replied her brother; "and upon this understanding many subscribed who are now rejoicing over the numbers of the sick. If the plague were to visit us, they might see the matter in its right light. They would scarcely rejoice that five hundred more were brought to the pest-house daily."

"But how comes the increase?" inquired Louisa. "I understand it in the case of the Lying-in Charity, which seems to me the worst in existence, except perhaps foundling hospitals; but this is different——"

"From all other institutions, it is to be hoped," interrupted her brother. "It is dreadful to see the numbers of poor women disappointed of a reception at the last moment, and totally unprovided. The more are admitted, the more are thus disappointed; and those who are relieved quit the hospital in a miserable state of destitution."

"Probably, brother. What else could be expected under so direct a bounty on improvidence—under so high a premium on population? But how do you imagine the number of sick increases so fast? Are your Dispensary patients

in due proportion to the general increase of numbers in the place?"

"Alas, no! They are much more numerous. Not only do numbers increase very rapidly; but from their increasing beyond the means of comfortable subsistence, the people are subject to a multitude of diseases arising from hardship alone. It would make your heart ache if I were to tell you how large a proportion of my Dispensary patients are children born puny from the destitution of their parents, or weakly boys and girls, stunted by bad nursing, or women who want rest and warmth more than medicine, or men whom I can never cure until they are provided with better food."

"How you must wish sometimes that your surgery was stocked with coals and butcher's meat!"

"If it were, Louisa, the evil would only be increased, provided this sort of medicine were given gratis, like my drugs. There is harm enough done by the poor taking for granted that they are to be supplied with medicine and advice gratis all their lives: the evil is increasing every day by their looking on assistance in child-birth as their due; and if they learn to expect food and warmth in like manner, their misery will be complete."

"But what can we do, brother? Distress exists: no immediate remedy is in the hands of the poor themselves. What can be done?"

"These are difficulties, Louisa, which dog the heels of all bad institutions.—We must do this.

We must make the best of a vast amount of present misery, thankful that we see at length the error of having caused it. We must steadily refuse to increase it, and employ all the energies of thinking heads and benevolent hearts in preventing its recurrence, and shortening to the utmost its duration. Here is ample scope for all the tenderness of sensibility which moralists would encourage, and for all the wisdom which can alone convert that tenderness into true charity."

"What should be our first step, brother?"

"To ascertain clearly the problem which we are to solve. The grand question seems to me to be this—*How to reduce the number of the indigent?* which includes, of course, the question, *How to prevent the poor becoming indigent?*"

"If this had been the problem originally proposed, brother, there would have been little indigence now: but formerly people looked no farther than the immediate relief of distress, and thought the reality of the misery a sufficient warrant for alms-giving."

"And what is the consequence, Louisa? Just this: that the funds raised for the relief of pauperism in this country exceed threefold the total revenues of Sweden and Denmark. Ay; our charitable fund exceeds the whole revenue of Spain; and yet distress is more prevalent than ever, and goes on to increase every year. The failure of British benevolence, vast as it is in amount, has hitherto been complete; and all for want of right direction."

“ Well, brother, how would you direct it? How would you set about *lessening the number of the indigent?* ”

“ I would aim at two objects : increasing the fund on which labourers subsist, and proportioning their numbers to this fund.—For the first of these purposes, not only should the usual means of increasing capital be actively plied, but the immense amount which is now unproductively consumed by the indigent should be applied to purposes of production. This cannot be done suddenly; but it should be done intrepidly, steadily, and at a gradually increasing rate. This would have the effect, at the same time, of fulfilling the other important object,—that of limiting the number of consumers to a due proportion to the fund on which they subsist.”

“ You would gradually abolish all charitable institutions then——O no! not all. There are some that neither lessen capital nor increase population. You would let such remain.”

“ There are some which I would extend as vigorously and perseveringly as possible; viz., all which have the enlightenment of the people for their object. Schools should be multiplied and improved without any other limit than the number and capabilities of the people.”

“ What! all schools? Schools where maintenance is given as well as education?”

“ The maintenance part of the plan should be dropped, and the instruction remain.”

“ But, brother, if one great evil of gratuitous assistance is that the poor become dependent

upon a false support, does not this apply in the case of a gratuitous education?"

"The time will come, I trust, Louisa, when, the poorer classes will provide wholly for themselves and their families; but at present we must be content with making them provide what is essential to existence. To enable them to do this, they must be educated; and as education is not essential to existence, we may fairly offer it gratis till they have learned to consider it indispensable. Even now, I would have all those pay something for the education of their children who can; but let all be educated, whether they pay or not."

"The blind, and the deaf and dumb, I suppose, among others?"

"Yes; and in these cases I would allow of maintenance also, since the unproductive consumption of capital in these cases is so small as to be imperceptible, and such relief does not act as a premium upon population. A man will scarcely be in any degree induced to marry by the prospect of his blind or deaf children being taken off his hands, as the chances are ten thousand to one against any of his offspring being thus infirm. Such relief should be given till there are none to claim it."

"I heard the other day, brother, of a marriage taking place between a blind man and woman in the asylum at X——."

"Indeed! If anything could make me put these institutions on my proscribed list, it would be such a fact as that. The man could play the

organ, and the woman knit, and make sash-line, I suppose?"

"Just so; and they could each do several other things, but, of course, not those common offices which are essential to the rearing of a family. It struck me immediately as a crime against society. Well—what other charities should stand?"

"Whatever else I resign, Louisa, I shall retain my office at the Casualty Hospital. I hope this kind of relief will be dispensed with in a future age; but the people are not yet in a condition to provide against the fractures, wounds and bruises which befall them in following their occupations. This institution may rank with Blind Asylums."

"And what do you think of alms-houses for the aged?"

"That they are very bad things. Only consider the numbers of young people that marry under the expectation of getting their helpless parents maintained by the public! There are cases of peculiar hardship, through deprivation of natural protection, where the aged should be taken care of by the public. But the instances are very rare where old people have no relations; and it should be as universal a rule that working men should support their parents, as that they should support their children. If this rule were allowed, we might see some revival of that genial spirit of charity and social duty among the poor, whose extinction we are apt to mourn, without reflecting that we ourselves have

caused it by the injudicious direction of our own benevolence.—This reminds me of the Bridgemans. Mark how those poor children are disposed of. Two are taken care of by distant relations who have never in their lives accepted charity, except the schooling of their children. A nearer relation, who has, to my knowledge, uselessly consumed many a pound of the charitable fund, sends the other two to the workhouse.”

“A case very appropriate to what you have been saying, brother. But how is poor Sally? Can nothing save her sight?”

“Nothing, I fear. I have already spoken of her case to several governors of the Blind Asylum, where I hope she may be received on the first vacancy. The Marshalls are too sensible, I am sure, not to see the advantage of getting her placed there; and it may be the means of releasing one of the others from the workhouse.”

Louisa now related her morning's adventures. Her brother smiled as he warned her that she would, no doubt, be pronounced an eccentric young woman by Mr. Nugent, and declared that he thought her in the way to be admirably disciplined, between the railings of Mrs. Wilkes, the rude wonder of the paupers, and the more refined speculations of those who had different notions of charity from herself.

Louisa considered that an important constituent of charity was its capability of “bearing all things.” She blushed while she described to her best friend the little trials she was exposed to in her attempts to do good. Abuse from

beggars she little regarded, as it was the portion of all who passed along the streets of this ill-regulated city without giving alms; much harder things to bear were the astonishment of her fellow-members of the school committee at her refusing to sanction large gifts of clothing to the children; the glances of the visitors of the soup and blanket charities, when she declined subscribing and yielding her services; and, above all, the observations of relatives whom she respected, and old friends whom she loved, on the hardness of heart and laxity of principle shown by those who thought and acted as she did.

“Laxity of principle!” exclaimed her brother. “That is a singular charge to bring in such a case;—as if less vigour of principle was required to reflect on the wisest, and to adopt unusual, methods of doing good than to let kindly emotions run in the ruts of ancient institutions! I should say that the vigour of principle is on your side.”

“Better make no decision about it, brother. It is not the province of charity to meddle with motives, whatever its real province may be.—But about your medical offices;—it seems to me that you must resign them, thinking as you do.”

“And then what a hard-hearted, brutal fellow I shall be thought,” said her brother, smiling.

“No, no: only an oddity. But the speculations upon you may prove good for the cause of charity.”

“It shall be done, Louisa; and that as soon as we have determined on the best manner. I

shall give up the Dispensary and the Lying-in Charity, and keep the Casualty Hospital. As for the Workhouse Infirmary——”

“ Ay ; I was wondering what you would say to that.”

“ I like it no better, but considerably worse, than many others ; but it stands on a different footing, inasmuch as it is established by law ; and it seems to me that I must follow other methods of abolition than that of withdrawing my services. There is no place of appeal for such an act, as there is in the case of a voluntary charity.”

“ There is little enough that is voluntary in this case, to be sure, brother. Such complaints about the rate from the payers ! Such an assertion on the part of the poor of their right to a maintenance by the state ! Whence arises this right ?”

“ I do not admit it,” replied her brother. “ Those who do admit it, differ respecting its origin. Some assert the right of every individual born into any community to a maintenance from the state ; regarding the state and its members as holding the relation of parent and children. This seems to me altogether a fallacy ;—originating in benevolent feelings, no doubt, but supported only by a false analogy. The state cannot control the number of its members, nor increase, at its will, the subsistence-fund ; and, therefore, if it be engaged to support all the members that might be born to it, it would engage for more than it might have the power to per-

form.—Others, who admit this in the abstract, plead for the right of the indigent of Great Britain to a maintenance from the state, on the ground of the disabilities to which the poor are peculiarly liable in this country, from the aristocratic nature of some of our institutions, the oppressive amount of taxation, and its pressure upon the lower classes. I admit a claim to relief here; but the relief should not be given, even could it be effectual, in the shape of an arbitrary institution like that of our pauper system. The only appropriate relief is to be found in the removal of the grievances complained of; in the modification of certain of our institutions; in the lightening, and, yet more, in the equalization of taxation.—Mark what a state we have arrived at from our mistaken recognition of this *right* to support! Though the subsistence-fund has increased at a rapid rate within a hundred years, through the improvements introduced by art and civilization, the poor-rate has, in that time, increased from five or six hundred thousand pounds a-year to upwards of eight millions!”

“Some say,” observed his sister, “that it is not the recognition of the right which has caused the mischief, but the imperfect fulfilment of the original law. You know better than I whether this is true.”

“It is clear,” replied her brother, “that neither the letter nor the spirit of the original law was adhered to; but it is also clear that, in that law, the state promised more than it could perform. Did you ever read the famous clause of

the famous 43d of Elizabeth? No? There lies Blackstone. I will show it you."

"But first tell me what state the poor were in when that act was passed."

"For the credit of Elizabeth's government, it is certainly necessary to premise what you inquire about.—From the year 597, that is, from Pope Gregory's time, tithes paid to the clergy were expressly directed to be divided into four parts, as Blackstone here tells us, you see; one part for the bishops, one for the clergyman, incumbent, or parson; one for repairing and keeping up the church; and one for the maintenance of the poor."

"But do the clergy pay a fourth part of their tithes to the poor?"

"O no," replied her brother, laughing. "That troublesome order was got rid of many hundred years ago; and so was the clause respecting the share of the bishops; so that tithes became, in a short time, a very pretty consideration. Well; though some notice of the poor was occasionally taken by the legislature, no complaints of their state made much noise till Henry VIII. suppressed the monasteries. These monasteries had supported crowds of idle poor, who were now turned loose upon the country; and with them a multitude of vagabond monks, who were a nuisance to the whole kingdom. It became necessary to stop the roaming, begging, and thieving, which went on to the dismay and injury of all honest people; and for this purpose, the famous act of Elizabeth was framed. This

statute enacts, 'That the churchwardens and overseers shall take order, from time to time, (with the consent of two or more justices,) for setting to work the children of all such whose parents shall not be thought able to keep and maintain their children; and also for setting to work all such persons, married or unmarried, having no means to maintain them, and using no ordinary or daily trade to get their living by; and also to raise, by taxation, &c., a convenient stock of flax, to set the poor on work; and also competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among them, being poor and not able to work.' You see how this is aimed at vagabonds as well as designed for the impotent. Many a monkish bosom, no doubt, heaved a sigh at the mention of 'a convenient stock of flax.'"

"Surely, brother," said Louisa, "the state promises by this act just what you said no state could fairly promise, without having the control of its numbers; it promises to support all its indigent members."

"It does; and it promises another thing equally impossible of fulfilment. Here is an engagement to find employment for all who would not or could not procure it for themselves. Now, as the employment of labour must depend on the amount of the subsistence-fund, no law on earth can enforce the employment of more labour than that fund can support."

"Then this promise has not been fulfilled, I suppose?"

“ Many attempts have been made to fulfil it, all of which have had the effect of diverting industry from its natural channel, and taking the occupation of the independent labourer out of his hands to put it into that of the pauper. This is so ruinous an operation, that the wonder is how the pauper system has failed to swallow up all our resources, and make us a nation of paupers.”

“ In which case,” observed Louisa, “ the state would be found to have engaged to maintain itself in a pauper condition. What a blunder ! Twenty-four millions of paupers are bound by law to maintain twenty-four millions of paupers !”

“ This is the condition we shall infallibly be brought to, Louisa, unless we take speedy means to stop ourselves. We are rolling down faster and faster towards the gulf, and two of our three estates, Lords and Commons, have declared that we shall soon be in it ;—that in a few more years the profits of all kind of property will be absorbed by the increasing rates, and capital will therefore cease to be invested ; land will be let out of cultivation, manufactures will be discontinued, commerce will cease, and the nation become a vast congregation of paupers.”

“ Dreadful ! brother. How can we all go quietly about our daily business with such a prospect before us ?”

“ A large proportion of the nation knows little about the matter : some hope that fate, or Providence, or something will interfere to save us ; others think that it is no business of theirs ;

and those whose business it is are at a loss what to do."

"But how long has there been so much cause for alarm?"

"Only within a few years. Thanks to the ungracious mode of executing the law, it effected less mischief during a century and a half than might have been anticipated. When persons could be relieved only in their own parishes, and when that relief was given in a manner which exposed the applicant to a feeling of degradation among his neighbours, few asked relief who could by any means subsist without it. Workhouses, too, were regarded as odious places, and to the workhouse paupers must go, in those days, if out of employ; and all who had any sense of comfort or decency delayed to the very last moment classing themselves with paupers. So that, up to 1795, the state was less burdened with pauperism than, from the bad system it had adopted, it deserved."

"What makes you fix that precise date?"

"Because in that year a change took place in the administration of the poor-laws, which has altered the state of the country disastrously. There was a scarcity that season, and consequently much difficulty with our paupers, among whom now appeared not only the helpless, but able-bodied, industrious men, who could no longer maintain their families. It was most unfortunately agreed by the county magistrates, first of Berkshire, and afterwards of other parts of

the middle and south of England, that such and such ought to be and should henceforth be the weekly income of the labouring poor; and a table was published, exhibiting the proportions of this income according to the size of families and the price of bread."

"But how could that mend the matter?" exclaimed Louisa. "These magistrates and the public could not increase the quantity of bread, and where was the use, then, of giving money? It was merely taking bread from those who had earned it, to give it to those who had not."

"Just so; but these magistrates did not happen to view the matter as you do; and we have great cause to rue their short-sightedness.—Mark how the system has worked!—All labourers are given to understand that they ought to have a gallon loaf of wheaten bread weekly for each member of their families, and one over; that is, three loaves for two people, and eleven for ten. John comes and says that his wife and four children and himself must have seven loaves, costing twelve shillings; but that he can earn only nine shillings. As a matter of course, three shillings are given him from the parish.—Next comes Will. He has a wife and six children, and must have nine loaves, or fourteen shillings and eightpence. He earns ten shillings, and receives the rest from the parish. Hal is a vagabond whom no capitalist will admit within his gates. Work is out of the question; but his family must be fed, and want eight loaves: so

the parish pays him thirteen shillings and eightpence."

"So that, in fact," observed Louisa, "eleven loaves are earned by these three families, and the twelve still deficient are taken from other earners. How very unjust! How very ruinous! But does this kind of management still go on?"

"Universally in the agricultural counties, with such slight variations as are introduced by local circumstances.—Great allowance must be made for the pressure of difficulties at the time when this system was adopted; but the system itself is execrable, however well-meaning its authors. The industry of the lower classes has been half ruined by it, and their sense of independence almost annihilated. The public burdens have become well nigh overwhelming; and the proportion of supply and demand in all the departments of industry is so deranged that there is no saying when it can be rectified."

"It is rather hard upon the poor," observed Louisa, "that we should complain of their improvidence when we bribe them to it by promising subsistence at all events. Paupers will spend and marry faster than their betters as long as this system lasts."

"It makes one indignant to see it," replied her brother. "I am now attending an industrious young man, a shopkeeper, who has been attached for years, but will not marry till his circumstances justify it. He has paid more to the rates every year; and half a dozen vagabond

paupers have married in his parish during the time that he has been waiting."

"All these things, brother, bring us round to the question, what are we to do?"

"You must enlighten the children in your school, and all the poor you have any influence over, Louisa. As for me,—it is unnecessary to open my lips upon it to my country patients, for I seldom enter a farmhouse without hearing complaints of the system. But our towns are too quiet about the matter. General, calm, enlightened deliberation is required, and that without loss of time.—I am prepared with testimony respecting the increase of sickness and mortality which accompanies the augmentation of the poor-rate. Most happy should I be to have the opportunity of delivering it."

"Our wise men," said Louisa, "must start afresh the old question, and the nation must gather round them to be taught anew, '*What is Charity?*'"

CHAPTER IV.

PAUPER LIFE.

No one could pass the gates of the workhouse on pay-day without seeing how much misery existed among the claimants of out-door relief;

but few could guess, without following these applicants to their homes, how much guilt attended, not only their poverty, but the advancement of their claims;—guilt which would never have been dreamed of unless suggested and encouraged by a system which destroys the natural connexion between labour and its rewards.

Mrs. Bell's husband was now out of work, after having earned and regularly spent twenty-five shillings a week for many months. His third child had died after a long illness, and one which had proved expensive to the parish, from whence this family now derived four and sixpence a week. Mrs. Bell, who always went herself to receive the weekly allowance, lest her husband, through his dislike of the business, should not "manage it cleverly," took credit to herself for having given notice that the doctor need not take any more trouble about her poor boy, as he was past hope and nothing more could be done for him; but she omitted to state the reason of his being past hope, (*viz.*, that he was dead,) because it would have been inconvenient to give up the allowance received on his account. So no doctor came to ask awkward questions, and the money was a great comfort indeed. Mrs. Bell had truly managed the whole matter very "cleverly." She got another blanket, even out of due season, because the boy was apt to be cold at night. The Sick Poor Society allowed her a certain sum weekly as long as the child lived; and two or three kind neighbours gave her leave to call at their houses when they had a wholesome

joint for dinner, to carry away a slice and vegetables for the patient; and if all these desired her to call on the same day, she managed to borrow a couple of basins and obey directions; for though the patient could not eat three dinners at a time, nor perhaps even one, there were others in the house who liked savoury meat, and it was only returning their thanks for the "nourishing cordial" in poor Bob's name. Then came the lamentations over the impossibility of burying him decently, and the thanksgivings for a half-crown here and there for the purpose; and then hints about any old rag of black, and the pain to maternal feelings of having no mourning for so dear a child; and the tears at sight of the black stuff gown, and the black silk bonnet, and the black cotton shawl,—all so much too good for her before they were put into her hands, but pronounced rusty, rotten old rubbish when surveyed at home. Then came the commands to the children to say nothing about Bob unless they were asked, and the jealousy of that prying, malicious old widow Pine, who peeped through her lattice a full hour before she should properly have awaked, and just in time to see the coffin carried out of the yard. Lastly, came the subtraction of poor Bob's parish allowance from the rest before the money was delivered into her husband's hand. The early waking of widow Pine, and the use she might make of what she saw, no mortal could prevent; but all that devolved upon herself, Mrs. Bell flattered herself that she had "managed very cleverly."

One day when she was going to the workhouse for her allowance, her husband accompanied her part of the way. Widow Pine was before them in the street, stepping feebly along, supported by a stick in one hand and by the wall on the other side.

"She'll trip over the tatters of her gown," exclaimed Bell. "Poor old soul! she is not fit to walk the streets,—bent double, and ready to be knocked down by the first push. She will not trouble the parish long."

"She will die in the streets," replied his wife, "and with bad words in her mouth. She is for ever prying about people's affairs, and saying malicious things of her neighbours. The old hypocrite! she sits see-sawing herself, and drawling hymns while she combs her grey hair that never was cut, and all the while pricking up her ears for scandal."

"You and she never had much love to lose," replied Bell, obeying his wife's motion to cross the street to avoid passing at the widow's elbow. She saw them, however, and sent her well-known piping after them, striking the pavement with her stick, to attract the notice of the passers by.

"I wish you joy of your blue gown, Mrs. Bell! 'Tis no great thing to lose a child that comes to life again every parish pay-day!"

"Never mind the old wretch," said Bell. "By the by, I have observed you put off your black sometimes. What is it for?"

"The officers are so quick-sighted about a new gown. They might take off some pay if

they knew I had a friend that would give me a gown; and it really is a rag not worth disputing about."

The husband was satisfied, but much annoyed with the abuse that came from over the way.

"I'll crush you, yet!" railed the old woman. "I can, and I will, such a pack of knaves and liars as you are! You'll soon hear from the parish, I warrant you! You'll soon be posted for cheats!"

"I say, goody, hold your foul tongue, or I'll correct you as you little think for," said Bell.

"You! what harm can you do me, I wonder?—you that are lost, and I a holy person."

"A holy person! How do you mean holy?" asked Bell, laughing.

"How do you mean holy! Why, sure of heaven, to be sure. I'm sure of heaven, I tell you, and you are lost! God has given me nothing else, for a miserable life I've had of it; but he has given me grace, and is not that enough?"

"You must keep it close locked up somewhere, for never a one found out you had it," said Mrs. Bell. "I doubt the Talbots that have been so kind to you have never seen much of your grace."

"Kind to me! The proud, mean, slandering folks! You little know the Talbots if you think they can be generous to anybody. They'll meet you hereafter when I shall be in a better place!"

"That is pretty well," said Bell, "when you have had bed and board, clothes and comfort,

from that family from your youth up. Suppose I tell them what you say, neighbour."

"As you please. It is only what I have told them myself. I shall look to hear you curse them soon, Mrs. Bell, for they have been told how you take parish money for your dead child. So you got a blanket to keep the boy warm? He's in a hot place now,—a little unregenerate devil as he was! If he was not to be saved, you are well off to be rid of him so soon."

The husband and wife quickened their pace till they got out of hearing, the one full of disgust, the other of the fear of detection. She was anxious to receive her money before the widow should arrive; but there was already such a crowd about the gates that she saw she must wait long for her turn.

Two of the paupers had secured a seat on the door-step of an opposite house: the one, a well known beggar, whose occupation had never been effectually interfered with by the police; the other, a young man, who was jeered at as a stranger by some who weekly resorted to this place. One gave him joy of his admission to the pauper brotherhood; another asked how he liked waiting on the great; a third observed that he could not judge till he had waited two hours in the snow of a winter's noon.

"Never fret yourself for their gibes, Hunt," said Childe, the beggar. "You are more in the way to do well than you have been this many a day. You may make what you will of the great, if you do but know how to set about it."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Hunt, fidgeting about in a state of great agitation. "I'm sure the rich know well enough what to make of us. Not a word do we ever hear from them about our right to be kept from starvation; and they expect us to be wonderfully grateful for a parish dole, while they cut off a pound of meat a week from every poor soul's allowance within yonder walls, and advise us to mix rye with our wheaten bread.—'Tis true, as I'm alive! A man told me so just now as he came out of yonder gate."

"Well; let us get the pound of meat for our share if we can. I'll bet you a wager, Hunt, I'll get a shilling a week more out of them for this very prank of theirs."

"Done!" cried Hunt. "I bet you a penny roll they will be too sharp for you."

"A penny roll!" exclaimed Childe. "A pint of wine is the lowest bet I ever lay, man. A pint of red port to be paid to-night. Come!"

"You might as well ask me to bet a diamond," said Hunt, laughing bitterly. "How am I to get port wine?"

"I'll show you when our business here is done," said Childe. "Your father was my friend, or I should not open my confidence so easily. But just stand a minute at that fat woman's elbow, will you? Just to screen me a bit. There; that will do. Don't look round till I bid you."

When Hunt had permission to look round, he scarcely knew his companion. Childe had slipped off his worsted stocking and bound it over his forehead and chin, so as to look very sickly.

He sprinkled a few grains from his snuff-box into his eyes, so as to look blear-eyed, and forthwith set himself to tremble all over, except his right arm which appeared stiff.

"I have had a slight stroke of palsy this week, you see," said he. "I can just get abroad to show that I must have another shilling a week.—Hang it, Hunt, it is not worth the trouble for such a trifle, if it was not for the bet!"

Hunt thought a shilling a week no trifle, and wondered how Childe came by such mighty notions.

"Because I've an *e* at the end of my name, man, that's all. That little letter makes a great man of me. It is worth house and board and tobacco and clothes to me for the whole of my old age. You think I am mad, I see; but, hark'ee! did you never hear of Childe's Hospital?"

"Yes; near London. Is not it?"

"Yes; and I have the next turn there, and a merry life I make of it till I get in, fearing that the confinement may be rather too close for my liking. However, it is not a thing to be sneezed at. The money gathers so fast that 'tis thought we Childes shall have silver spoons by the time I enter the brotherhood. I like gentility, and I would give up a little roving for the sake of it."

"But how had you the luck to get on the list?" inquired Hunt. "Who befriended you?"

"Lord bless you, how little you know about such things! 'Twas I befriended the trustees, not they me. They are beholden to me for

saving them the trouble of searching farther for a Child with an e at the end of his name. None others will do by the terms of the bequest, which is for the support of thirteen aged men of the same name with the pious founder.—A deal of pride in his piety, I doubt, Hunt.—Well: the funds have grown and grown, and the trustees can't use them up any how, though their dinners and plate and knick-knackeries are the finest of the fine, I'm told; and the thirteen aged men have all they ask for. You should see what a figure I cut on the list of candidates,—alone in my glory, as they say;—‘honest industry’—‘undeserved poverty’—‘infirmities of advancing years,’ and so forth. I wonder they did not make a soldier or a sailor of me at once,—‘to justify their choice,’ as they finish by saying. Why, man, you look downright envious!”

“I wish any great man of the name of Hunt had endowed an hospital,” sighed Hunt; “but I am afraid there would be too many claimants to give me a chance.”

“To be sure. There's not one in ten thousand meets with such luck as mine. Bless you! there would be a string of Hunts a mile long, in such a case.”

And the beggar threw himself back, laughing heartily; but suddenly stopped, saying,

“Mercy! how nearly I had lost my bet! People in the palsy do not laugh, do they?”

“When do you expect to get into this hospital?” inquired Hunt, who could think of nothing

else; "and how do you keep yourself so sleek meanwhile?"

"I shall depart to that better place when any one of the old pensioners departs to a better still," replied the beggar; "meanwhile, I grow fat in the way I will show you presently. Now for it. It is our turn. Do you keep just behind me and see how I manage."

The method was worth watching. Childe won his way slowly among the groups, preserving his paralytic appearance wonderfully, and exciting the compassion of all who took notice of him.

"And who may you be, friend?" inquired the officer, as Childe approached the counter where the pay was being distributed. "Bless me! Childe! My poor fellow, how you are altered! You have had a stroke, I am afraid?"

"If it's ordained that the grasshopper must become a burden," said Childe, mumbling in his speech, "we must submit, and be thankful to have lived so long. But you will not refuse me another shilling, sir."

The officer was about to comply, when an assistant who stood by him remarked that the applicant looked wonderfully ruddy for a paralytic man, and that his eyes were as bright as ever. Hunt, who stood behind, jogged his arm, from which the stick immediately fell. Childe appeared to make several ineffectual efforts to pick it up, and looked imploringly towards the people behind him, as if complaining that they pressed upon him. The officer spoke sharply to Hunt,—

“ Pick up the man’s stick, you brute! You knocked it out of his hand, and you stand staring as if you liked to see how helpless he is.—You observe, John, his right arm is quite useless. Give him another shilling.”

Hunt wished he had abstained from his practical hint. Before he could state his case, a woman got the officer’s ear.—Sarah Simpson, spinster, by name and title. She was a clean, tight little body, poorly dressed, and sickly in appearance. She appeared excessively nervous, her eyes rolling and her head twitching incessantly. She pleaded for more pay, saying that she had a note from one of the guardians respecting it: but for this note her trembling hands searched in vain, while she was pushed about by the people who still continued to fill the room.

“ Make haste, good woman,” said the officer. “ We can’t wait on you all day.”

At this moment, the poor creature turned round and swore a tremendous oath at a man who had taken upon him to hurry her.

“ Upon my word, that is pretty well for a spinster!” observed the officer. “ If you are not satisfied with your pay, madam, I would recommend your going into the workhouse. You have nobody dependent on you, I believe, and I should think the workhouse a very proper place for you.”

“ She has been there already,” said the assistant. “ Her tongue put me in mind of that.

The master tells me such oaths were never heard within the walls as this woman's."

"Mercy, gentlemen, what did I say?" asked the poor creature, whose eyes now rolled frightfully. "I am not myself at times, gentlemen, when I'm hurried, gentlemen. I have such a—such a—such a strife and strangling here," she continued fretfully, tearing open her gown, and shaking herself like a passionate child.

"Well, well, that's enough of your symptoms; we are not your doctors," said the assistant; "take your money and make way."

In a hurried manner she closed her gown and drew back, forgetting her money, which however Hunt put into her hand.

"Only two shillings!" exclaimed the poor creature, returning timidly to the counter. "A'n't I to have what the gentleman recommended, then, sir?"

"You are to have no more money, so let us have no more words," said the officer. "You have your full share already."

Mrs. Bell, whose period of waiting seemed coming to an end, advanced to say that Sarah Simpson was subject to flights at times, when she did not know what words came out of her mouth; but that she was a humble, pious Christian as could be.

"I am afraid your recommendation is not worth much," observed the officer. "Let us see.—Your husband, yourself, and how many children?"

Mrs. Bell, suspecting herself suspected, hesitated whether to say four or five. She shaped her answer dubiously,—

“Four and sixpence a week is what we have had, sir.”

“How many children?” thundered the officer.

“Four,” admitted the terrified Mrs. Bell, who was glad to get away with three and sixpence, and a rating from the men in authority, accompanied by sneers and jests from the hearers. On her way home she laid the entire blame on the ill-nature of her neighbours, especially on the spite of old widow Pine.

Hunt obtained a small allowance, and left the place, grumbling at its amount and at the prospect of having to spend it all in wine to pay his wager. Childe, however, gave him his first lesson in the mysteries of begging. Under the pretence of sport, he practised the art for the first time in a street on the outskirts of the city, through which many gentlemen passed in their way home to dinner from their counting-houses. Hunt was astonished at his own success, and began to calculate how much alms might be given away in a year in this single street, if he and Childe had the begging department all to themselves. It might be enough, he thought, to enable them to set up a shop.—When the parish clock struck eight, Childe came to him and said it was near supper-time. Hunt was glad of it, for he was very hungry, having had nothing since morning. Childe begged pardon for the freedom

of calling him a fool, but could not conceive why he had not taken a chop in the middle of the day, as it was his custom to do : it was sticking rather too close to the main chance to sit without food from morning till evening for fear of missing a monied passenger.

Hunt followed his tutor to a public-house in the heart of the city, called the Cow and Snuffers. Hunt had supposed this house too respectable to be the resort of beggars ; but was informed that the fraternity thought nothing too good for them when their day's business was at an end, and the time of refreshment was come ; not as it comes to poor artizans in their sordid homes, but rather to convivial men of wealth.

" Stay ! " said Childe, as they were about to enter the house. " How much can you afford to spend ? Five shillings, I suppose, at the least.—Never start at such a trifle as that, man ! You will make it up between four and five to-morrow afternoon."

Hunt had not intended to beg any more ; but he deferred the consideration of the matter for the present, and followed Childe to a small room upstairs, furnished with washing apparatus, and with a wardrobe well stocked with respectable clothing. Three or four persons were already in this room dressing, their beggar apparel being thrown into a corner, and looking-glass, brushes, and towels, being all in requisition. Hunt was declared, after a brushing, to be presentable without a change of apparel, especially as he was a stranger. Childe was about to open

a door on the same floor, when a waiter stopped his hand and intimated that they must mount higher, as the room in question was occupied by the monthly meeting of the Benefit Club. The cloth was laid upstairs, and it was hoped the apartment might be found quite as comfortable.

On the question being put to the vote among the beggars already assembled, it was pronounced an intolerable nuisance to be turned out of their apartment regularly once a month by these shabby fellows, who were always thinking how they should save money instead of spending it. The landlord was rung for, and requested to intimate to the workpeople that a large convivial party desired to change rooms with them. The landlord objected that the apartment had been positively engaged from the beginning by the club, and he could not think of turning them out. Being assailed, however, by various questions,—how he could bring the two companies into comparison?—whether he could honestly declare that the custom of the club was worth more than a few shillings in the year?—and; lastly, how he would like to lose the patronage of the beggars' company?—he consented to carry a message—the answer to which was a civil refusal to budge. Message after message was sent in vain. The club, having ascertained that there were unoccupied rooms in the house which would suit the purpose of the other party as well, very properly chose to keep the landlord to his engagement.

“It's monstrous, upon my soul!” cried a lady

beggar, making her entrée with a curtsey, which she had first practised on the boards of a barn, when personating Juliet,—“it is really monstrous to be poked into an attic in this way;—and to miss the view of the cathedral, too, which is so attractive to strangers!”

The appearance of this lady suggested a last appeal.

“Tell them,” said Childe, “that there’s a lady in the case,—a lady who is partial to the view of the cathedral.”

The club sent their compliments, and would be happy to accommodate the lady with a seat among them, whence she might view the cathedral at leisure, while they settled their accounts.

The club were pronounced ill-mannered wretches, and the representations of the landlord about the probable overroasting of the geese were listened to. Supper was ordered. Roast goose top and bottom;—an informality for which apology was made to Hunt, on the ground that the company liked nothing so well as goose in the prime of the pea-season;—abundance of pease; delicate lamb chops and asparagus, and so forth. Hunt had never before beheld such a feast.

“It will be long enough,” observed a junior member, “before those shabby fellows below treat themselves with such a set-out as this. I never liked their doings when I was an operative: I was one of the other sort.”

“What other sort?”

"One of the good livers, and not one of the frugal. I and some friends of mine used to sup something in this fashion when we earned near three guineas a week. We used to get our fowls from London."

"Bravo! and what made you leave off trade?"

"I was turned off in bad times, and I shall tell you no more; for I hate to think of that winter of cold and water-gruel. My nose was positively frost-bitten, and my stomach like a wet bladder most part of the twenty-four hours. Pah! it was horrid."

"You would have exchanged conditions with one of the frugal at that time, probably?"

"Why, I did envy one his bit of fire, and another his mess of broth; and the next winter I may envy them again, for I hear the magistrates have got scent of me; but no more of that now.—Miss Molly, your very good health! May I ask what you have done with your seven small children?"

"Left some of them on the bridge, and the rest in the Butchers'-row, with directions where to find me when the halfpence grow too heavy for them. I hope it is going to rain so that they will get little; for I don't want to be bored with the brats any more to-night."

"They must be quite too much for you sometimes."

"Hang it! they are. It is all I can do to remember their parentage, in case of its being convenient to return them. Two of them are getting to a troublesome age now,—so imper-

tinent! I must really get rid of them, and borrow another baby or two."

"Gentlemen," said Childe, when the cloth was drawn and the door closed behind the waiter, "we have long wanted a general-officer in our company, and I flatter myself I have found one who will fill the department excellently, if he can be induced to join us. Hunt, what say you? Will you be one of us?"

Hunt wished to know what would be expected of him.

"The fact is," said Childe, "I took a hint during my travels last year, which is too good to be let drop. General Y——, whom, as a boy, I used to see reviewing the troops, gamed and drank himself down into pauperism, and I met him last year walking the streets, not begging, but taking a vast deal of money; for it was whispered who he was, and everybody gave him something. 'Tis a case of the first water, you see, and it is a pity not to profit by it. You will find your part very easy. You have only to let your beard grow a little, and walk barefoot and bareheaded, buttoning your coat up to your chin in the way of military men, and as if to hide the want of a shirt. You must look straight before you as if you saw nobody, and keep your left hand in your bosom and your right by your side. You will find many a shilling put into it, I expect, and very little copper.—If you think it as well to vary the story, we can make you an admiral, with some resemblance to a pig-tail; but

you are hardly round-shouldered enough for a seaman, and there is something in the upright military walk that catches the eye better."

Hunt had some scruples of conscience, which were discovered and combated with wonderful address by his tutor. The argument which proved finally successful was, that if he believed he had a right to comfortable support, and could not obtain it either by work, or by allowance from the public fund, he must get it in any way he could.—Nobody inquired whether this permission was to extend to thieving, in case the gentry should take it into their heads to leave off giving alms; nor did any one trouble himself to consider where, short of murder, the line was to be drawn in the prosecution of this supposed right. Hunt had some confused notion that the act of *begging* is inconsistent with a claim of *right*: if he changed his petition into a demand, the act became one of highway robbery; between which and petty larceny and burglary, there are only degrees of the same guilt: there must be some flaw in this reasoning, since the gallows stood at the end of it. It might have been proved to him that, if he had the supposed right to support, he was now about to urge it in the wrong quarter; and that, therefore, no species of begging is defensible on this very common plea. It might also have been proved that the right itself is purely imaginary; but he was now in a company whence it was most convenient to banish all questions of right except those in-

volved in the settlement of bets, and of precedence in taking the chair. -

There was much laughter at the sober folks below ; the murmur of whose business-like voices rose occasionally during a pause, and who were heard descending the stairs before the clock struck ten. The waiter just then came up with a fresh supply of gin, Miss Molly having an inclination for another glass.

“ How much do those people spend each time, pray ? ”

“ Twopence a-piece, and a shilling over.”

In reply to the mirth which followed, Childe pointed out that the very object of their meeting was the promotion of frugality ; and that his only wonder therefore was, that they did not meet somewhere where they need spend nothing at all.

The waiter, who had looked grave during the laugh, now observed that the members of the club drank so little because they had something better to do. They read the newspapers, and took an important part in elections, and had the satisfaction of helping one another in many ways. He could speak to the satisfaction of being a member of one of these clubs, and the pride he felt in it. There was no occasion to fear any magistrate or constable living, or to have anything to do with the parish ; and they were, moreover, prepared so as to be at no man's mercy in times of trouble and sickness ; and when they were past work, there was a fund to

go to, over which they held a right; and this, in his opinion, was worth more than jollity with want in prospect. The man was ordered away, and threatened with being thrown out of the window for his impertinence, and a riotous chorus was struck up on his disappearance; but there were, possibly, others besides Hunt, who sighed at his words, before they began to sing in praise of gin and revelry.

CHAPTER V.

COUSIN MARSHALL'S CHARITIES.

MARSHALL was a member of the benefit club which met at the Cow and Snuffers. He had followed his father's advice and example by enrolling his name in it while yet a very young man; and he was now every day farther from repenting that he had thus invested the earnings of his youth. His companions, who knew him to be what is commonly called 'a poor creature,' smiled, and said that his club served him instead of a set of wits. He was not a man whose talents could have kept him afloat in bad times, and his club served admirably for a cork-jacket. His wife, who never seemed to have found out how much cleverer she was than her husband, put the matter in a somewhat different light,

She attributed to her husband all the respectability they were enabled to maintain, and which concealed from the knowledge of many that Marshall earned but moderate wages from being a slow and dull, though steady workman. She gave him the credit, not only of the regularity of their little household, (which was, indeed, much promoted by the sobriety of his habits,) but of the many kindnesses which they rendered to their neighbours, — from sending in a fresh egg to an invalid next door, to taking home two orphans to be maintained. If it had not been for her husband's way of storing his earnings, as cousin Marshall truly observed, these offices of goodwill would have been out of the question; and this observation, made now and then at the close of a hard day's work, when Sally was trying to knit beside him, dropping, unperceived, as many stitches, poor girl! as she knitted, and when little Ann was at play among his own children before the door, made the slow smile break over his grave face, and constituted him a happy man.

Sally's eyes grew daily worse. Mrs. Marshall had long suspected, but could never make sure of the fact, that she injured them much by crying. As often as Sally had reason to suppose she was watched, she was ready with the complaint "My eyes always water so;" and how many of these tears came from disease, and how many from grief, it was difficult to make out. She was seldom merry, now and then a little fretful, but generally quiet and grave. Her great pleasures

were to sit beside cousin Marshall, on the rare occasions when she could turn out all the little ones to play, and mend clothes of an afternoon; or to forget how old she was growing, and be taken on John Marshall's knee, and rest her aching forehead on his shoulder when he had an evening hour to spare. From the one she heard many stories of her mother as a girl no bigger than herself; and from the other, tidings of Ned and Jane, when, as often happened, John had been to see them. Mrs. Marshall now began to intersperse frequent notices of the Blind Asylum in her talk, trying to excite poor Sally's interest in the customs, employments, and advantages of the place; and she gave her husband a private hint to do the same, in order to familiarise the girl with the thought of the place she must shortly go to. John obeyed the hint; but he did it awkwardly. Whatever was the subject now started in his presence, it always ended in praises of the Blind Asylum, and declarations how much he should like to go there if it should please the Almighty to take away his eyesight. Sally was not long in fathoming the intention of this. At first she pressed down her forehead closer when John said 'a-hem' on approaching the subject; but soon she slid from his knee, and went away at the first sign.

"I think, John," said his wife, one evening when this happened, "poor Sally has heard enough for the present about this Asylum. It pains her sadly, I am afraid; but the time must be at hand, for she is very nearly blind now;

and as to a vacancy, some of the people are very old."

"I was going to say, wife, one of them is dead, and Sally can be got in on Saturday, as Mr. Burke bids me tell you. I met him to-day, and that was his message."

Cousin Marshall's thoughts were at once painfully divided, between satisfaction at having Sally thus comfortably provided for, and the sorrow of parting with her; between the doubt how her clothes were to be got ready, and the dread of telling the girl what was to come to pass. She decided on sending her to bed in the first place, in order to hold a consultation in peace; so she went in search of her, led her up herself to the little nook which had been partitioned off for her as an invalid, helped her to bed, instead of letting Ann do it, swallowed her tears while hearing the simple prayer she had taught her, kissed her, and bade her good night.

"Cousin Marshall," said the little girl, after listening a minute, "what are you doing at the window?"

"Hanging up an apron, my dear, to keep the morning sun off your face."

"O, don't do that! I don't see much of the light now, and I like to feel the sun and know when it shines in."

"Just as you like. But what are you folding your clothes under your head for? You shall have a pillow. O yes; I have a pillow—I'll bring it."

Sally nestled her head down upon it as if for

comfortable repose, while her cousin went down to meditate on her concerns. It was settled between the husband and wife, that either Ned or Jane should be immediately taken home in Sally's place, and that circumstances at the workhouse should determine which it should be.

Mrs. Marshall was wont to sleep as soundly as her toil and wholesome state of mind and conscience deserved; but this night she was disturbed by thoughts of the disclosure she must make in the morning. She scarcely closed her eyes while it was dark, and after it began to dawn, lay broad awake, watching the pink clouds that sailed past her little lattice, and planning how the washing, ironing, and preparing of Sally's few clothes was to be done, in addition to the day's business. Presently she thought she heard the noise of somebody stirring behind the little partition. She sat up and looked about her, thinking it might be one of the many children in the room; but they were all sound asleep in their wonted and divers postures. After repeated listenings, she softly rose to go and see what could ail Sally. She found her at the window; not, alas! watching the sunrise—for no sunrise should Sally ever more see—but drying her pillow in its first rays. The moment she perceived she was observed, she tossed the pillow into bed again, and scrambled after it; but it was too late to avoid explanation.

"It grieves me to chide you, my dear," said cousin Marshall; "but how should your eyes get better, if you take no more care of them?"

Here is your pillow wet through, wetter than it could have been if you had not been crying all night, and you are looking up at the flaring sky, instead of shutting your poor eyes in sleep."

"If I sleep ever so sound, cousin, I always wake when the sun rises, and I try sometimes how much I can see of him. It was scarce a blink to-day; so you need not fear its making my eyes ache any more. They never will be tried with bright light again! It is little more than a month since I could see yon tiled roof glistening at sunrise, and now I can't."

"That is no rule, my dear; the sun has moved somewhat, so that we can't see it strike straight upon it. That tiled roof looks blue to me now, and dull."

"Does it indeed?" cried Sally, starting up. "However, that is no matter, cousin; for my eyes are certainly very bad, and soon I shall not be able to do anything."

"O, but I hope you will soon be able to do more than ever I have been able to teach you. If you have not me beside you to take up stitches in your knitting, you will learn not to let them drop; and that is far better. And you will make sashline, and the more delicate sort of baskets; and you are better off than most at their first going into the Asylum, in having learned to wash a floor neatly, and to join your squares by the feel, almost as well as we that can see. Miss Burke could scarcely believe you were Sally, the first day she came, you were washing the floor so nicely."

Sally would have smiled at the compliment, but that she was too full of panic about the Asylum.

"But, cousin," she said, "it will be all so strange! I don't know any of the people, and I shall have no one to talk to. And that brown stuff dress, and little black bonnet, and the white handkerchiefs, all alike! I don't like to wear a charity dress. I remember——"

Before Sally could relate what it was that she remembered, her cousin stopped her with a gentle rebuke. She did not mind what Sally said about the place and the people being strange; it was natural, and it was an evil soon cured, and she hoped there would be less to tease the girl in the Asylum, than among the rough children at home; but she could not see what reason there was for so much pride as should disdain to wear a charity dress. Sally explained that it was not pride exactly; but she remembered how she and her sisters used to stare at the pupils of the Blind Asylum, as they met them going to church, and how she got out of the way in a great hurry, and followed them to see how they would manage to turn in at the gate; and sometimes when the master was not observing, she would look quite under their bonnets, without their finding it out, to see what their countenances were like. She should not like now to have anybody do the same to her. It was in vain that her cousin reasoned, that if she did not know it, it would not signify. The bare idea made her cry again as if she could not be comforted.

"You did not think at those times, Sally, of

doing as you would be done by. If anybody had told you then that you would be one of those pupils, you would have left off following them. But it seems to me that blind people remember as soon as any body to do as they would be done by; and so I hope you will find. I have often been in that Asylum, and it cheers one to see how cheerful the people are. 'It is God's will,' they say, when one asks them about their blindness. They are always ready with the word, 'It is God's will.' And it is not the word only, for they make the best of His will. If they make any little mistake, or do any little mischief unawares, they are thankful to be set right, and seem to forget it directly. But I hope you need not go there, Sally, to learn to say, cheerfully, 'It is God's will.'"

Sally tried to stop her tears.

"And as for doing as you would be done by," continued cousin Marshall, "now is your time. You have always found my husband tender to you, have not you?—and little Ann ready to guide and help you? Well, you don't know the concern John would feel, if he saw you leave us unwillingly, and I am afraid we could scarcely pacify Ann; but if you go with a steady heart and a cheerful face, they will see at once what a fine thing it is for you to be got into such a place. Just think now, if it was Ann instead of you, how would it make you most easy to see her?"

"O, cousin Marshall, I will try. Many's the time I have been glad it was not Ann. But when—when?"

Her cousin told her directly, that she was to go in the next day but one, so that she would soon be settled now, and find her lot come easy to her. After talking awhile longer with her so as to leave her quite composed, and bidding her go to sleep, as it was far too early to get up yet, she left her, and set quietly about her business, keeping on the watch to prevent husband and children making any noise in dressing, that Sally might sleep, if possible, into the middle of the day. One object in beginning her toil so early, was to have time to go to the workhouse, in the afternoon, with the news of the release of one of the children there.

On entering the workhouse, she heard more news than she came to tell. A service had been obtained for Jane at farmer Dale's, a little way in the country, whither she was to be removed next market-day. Immediately on the announcement of the plan, Ned had disappeared, and had not been heard of since.

Jane seemed to regard this event but little, so occupied was she with making up her mind whether on the whole she liked the change or not. It was a fine thing, she supposed, to be out of the workhouse; but there would be an end of workhouse frolics, and perhaps harder toil than she had been accustomed to. On cousin Marshall's inquiry, whether she had not earned a little money to carry away in her pocket, she replied that she had been obliged to spend it as fast as earned. How? Chiefly in buying a dinner every Monday when she could; for she could

never abide milk-broth ; and the rest went for a better bonnet for Sundays, the one she brought with her being too shabby to wear at church and the gardens.

“ Church and the gardens ! ” exclaimed cousin Marshall, very sternly. “ It is mostly vain and dainty girls like you, Jane, that come to learn how welcome milk is to an empty stomach, and that are kept away from church, to say nothing of the gardens, for want of decent covering. It is a great misfortune, Jane, to be a parish girl, but it is a far greater to forget that you are one.”

There was much matter of concern for John when he returned from work this night, in speculating upon where poor Ned could be, and upon what would become of Jane, with her very handsome face, her bold manner, and her vain and giddy mind. The good couple hoped she was going to a hard service, where she would be out of the way of temptation.

CHAPTER VI.

PARISH CHARITIES.

JOHN MARSHALL ran no great risk in offering to take his oath that poor Ned was after no harm. He was the last person in the world likely to plan mischief, or to wish to be idle with impunity. The fact was that he had long been uneasy on

Jane's account, seeing that she was not steady enough to take care of herself; and the idea of being separated from her, added to the disgust of his pauper situation, which he had been bred up to detest, was too much for him. He had absconded with the intention of finding work, if possible, in or near Titford, the village where farmer Dale lived. For the sake of leaving his pauper dress behind him, he chose Sunday for the day of departure, and stole away from church in the afternoon. He had but threepence in his pocket, one penny of which went for bread that night, when he had walked two-thirds of the distance, and found a place of rest under a stack. Another penny was spent in like manner at the baker's shop at Titford, on his arrival there at ten on the Monday morning. He found a stream at which to refresh himself; and then, trying how stout-hearted he could make himself, inquired the way to farmer Dale's, peeped through the farm-yard gate, and seeing a woman feeding the fowls, went in, and asked for work.

"We have nothing to spare for strangers," said she. "We must give more than we can afford to our own people."

"I ask no charity," said Ned. "I ask for work."

"Where do you come from?"

"From a distance. No matter where."

The woman, who proved to be Mrs. Dale, was afraid he had run away from his parents and was a naughty boy. Ned explained that he was an orphan, and only desired that it should be

proved whether he was naughty or not, by setting him to work, and trying whether he did not labour hard and honestly. Had he any money? He produced his penny. How did he get it? He earned it. Why not earn more in the same way? It was impossible. What could he do? He thought he could do whatever boys of his age could generally do. How would he manage if he could not get work here? He would walk on till he found some. Begging by the way, Mrs. Dale supposed. No, he never begged. Where did he sleep last night? Under a stack. Further back than this it was impossible to gather any information of his proceedings. Mrs. Dale went in search of her husband, to plead for the boy,—a thing which she would not have done, unless she had been particularly interested in the lad; for farmer Dale had grown sadly harsh of late about beggars and idle people. He proved so on this occasion; for instead of hearing what Ned had to say, he made signs to him over the fence to be gone, and when the poor lad lingered, shook his fist at him in a way so threatening, as to show that there was no hope.

Ned went to two more places with no better success. One large establishment remained to be tried; and, disheartened as he was, Ned determined to apply; though it was hardly to be expected that the master of such a place would take up with such a labourer as he. He resolved to make his application to no one but the master himself, and sat down to wait patiently for a

good opportunity, which occurred when the gentleman came home to dinner, and his wife met him at the gate of the flower-garden. Ned followed, and respectfully urged his petition. Long and close was the examination he underwent, before the gentleman, equally struck with his reserve on some points and his openness on others, resolved to give him a trial. Ned was well satisfied with the offer of twopence that night, and of fourpence a day afterwards, as long as he should pick up stones and do inferior work of other kinds to the satisfaction of his employer. Mr. Effingham, for that was the gentleman's name, would not allow him to spend his third penny for his dinner; but ordered him a slice of bread and meat from the kitchen; after eating which, Ned set to work with a grave face and a lightened heart.

On receiving his twopence, he was asked where he meant to lodge. He did not know; but if there was any empty barn or shed where he might lay down a little straw, he would take it as a favour to be allowed to sleep there till he should have saved a few pence to pay for a lodging. He was taken at his word, and for a month slept soundly in the corner of an old barn, his only disturbance being the rats, three or four of which were frequently staring him full in the face when he woke in the morning.

After a few days, he began to linger about farmer Dale's premises, at leisure times, in hopes of ascertaining whether Jane had arrived, but

could see nothing of her, and did not choose to inquire, knowing that after once having met her they could frequently exchange a few words without incurring the danger to himself in which he might be placed by asking for her. He was beginning to fear that the plan might be changed, and that Jane was not coming at all, when he heard tidings of her in a way that he little expected.

He was working in the field one day, when the bailiff approached, accompanied by farmer Dale. They were discussing the very common subject among farmers of the inconveniences of pauper labour.

"Don't you find these parish children a terrible plague?" inquired Dale. "They are the idlest, most impudent people I ever had to do with."

"It is just the same with us," replied the bailiff, "the men being quite as bad as the boys, or worse. How should it be otherwise when they do not work for themselves? One may see the difference by comparing this boy here with his neighbours. Ned is a hard-working lad as can be, and gives no trouble."

Ned turned round on hearing this and made his bow. He smiled when the bailiff went on to say,

"He is not a parish boy, but was taken on against my wish because he wanted a living, and work, work, was all his cry. It was very well he came, for we find it does not always follow

that a great many labourers do a great deal of work. This lad does nearly as much as two parish boys, as I told them the other day; and I am sorry I did, as I fear it has made them plague him instead of mending themselves."

"I cannot see," said Dale, "what is to become of us farmers if these infernal rates are to go on swallowing up our substance, and putting us at the mercy of our own labourers. There is a piece of land of mine up yonder that I might make a pretty thing of; and I cannot touch it, because the tithe and the poor-rate together would just swallow up the whole profit."

"What a waste it is," rejoined the bailiff, "when a subsistence is wanted for so many!"

"And then I don't know that we gain anything by employing paupers and paying their wages out of the rates; for they just please themselves about working, and when they are paid, say to my face, 'No thanks: for you must pay us for doing nothing, if you did not for doing something.' I had words like that thrown in my teeth this very morning by a parish girl we have taken, and who seems to have learned her lesson wonderfully for the time she has been with us. Says she to my wife, 'What care I whether I stay or go? The parish is bound to find me.' It will be something more of a punishment soon, perhaps, to be sent away, for she seems to like keeping company with the farm-servants very well;—a flirting jade! with a face that is like to be the ruin of her."

Ned felt too sure that this must be Jane.

"I would pack her off before worse came of it," said the bailiff.

"I shall try her a little longer," said Dale : "there is no knowing whether one would change for the better. In my father's time, or at least in my grandfather's, a man might have his choice among independent labourers that had some regard to character, and looked to what they earned ; but now the case is quite changed, except in the neighbourhood of flourishing large farms where the poor-rate is a very trifling concern. One may look round in vain for the cottagers one used to meet at every turn : they have mostly flocked to the towns, and are sent out to us again as pauper-labourers. There are more labourers than ever ; more by far than we want ; but they are labourers of a different and a much lower class."

"And the reason is evident enough," replied the bailiff. "Proprietors have suffered so much from the burden that is brought upon the land by cottagers' families, that they let no cottages be built that are not absolutely necessary. In towns, the burden is a very different thing, as land is divided into such small portions, and the houses built upon it let so high, that the increase of the rate does not balance the advantage ; to say nothing of its being divided among so many. The consequence is that the overflow from the villages goes into the towns, and the people come out into the country for work. If it were not for the poor-rate, we should see in every parish many a rood tilled that now lies waste,

and many a row of cottages tenanted by those who now help to breed corruption in towns."

"And then," said Dale, "we might be free from the promises and cheats of overseers. . God keep me from being uncharitable! but, upon my soul, I am sick of having to do with overseers. One undertakes to farm the poor; and then it would make any heart ache to see how they are treated, while he pockets every penny that can be saved out of their accommodation. Another begins making himself popular with pretending to reduce the rate; and then, the most respectable of the paupers pine at home without relief, while we are beset with beggars at every turn. The worst of all is such a man as our present overseer, who comes to taunt one with every increase of the rate, and to give hints how little scruple he should have in distraining for it. And this is the pass we shall all come to soon, unless I am much mistaken."

"As for beggars," replied the bailiff, "one would wonder where they come from. They swarm from all quarters like flies on the first summer day."

"One may see what brings them," said Dale, with a bitter laugh. "The flies come in swarms when there is a honey-pot near; and the beggars are brought by your master's charity purse. I reckon, from what I have seen here, that every blanket given away brings two naked people, and every bushel of coals a family that wants to be warmed."

The bailiff, instead of defending his master,

laughed significantly, and led the way onwards, leaving Ned to meditate with a heavy heart on as much as he understood of what they had been saying.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT COMES OF PARISH CHARITIES.

It was not long before Ned accomplished an interview with his giddy sister, and bitterly was he disappointed at her appearing not altogether glad to see him. Each time that they conversed, she seemed more constrained, and insisted further on the danger of his being discovered and incurring the displeasure of the superiors of the workhouse. Ned would listen to no hints about going up the country or back into the town: he chose to remain where he could keep an eye on Jane, and where moreover his own labour supplied him with necessaries, and enabled him to lay by a few pence now and then. The first of these reasons for keeping his place was soon removed, to the dismay and grief of all connected with Jane.

After having tried in vain for a fortnight to catch a sight of her, and afflicted himself perpetually with the thought of her depression of spirits the last time they met, Ned took the

resolution of walking up to farmer Dale's door and asking to speak to Jane Bridgeman. The farmer happened to be within hearing, and came forward to give the answer.

"Bless me, is it you? After the character your master gave me of you, I should not have thought of finding you asking after Jane Bridgeman. But you are all alike, paupers or no paupers, as long as there are paupers among us to spread corruption. Off with you, if you want to find the person you ask for! She is not here, thank God! and never shall she enter these doors again. It was a great folly ever to take her in, only that another might have been as bad.—Where is she?—Nay; that is no concern of mine. I suppose she will lie in in the workhouse she came from; but whether she went straight there, or where she went, I neither know nor care. Off with you from my premises, if you please!"

And the farmer shut the door in Ned's face. His wife had more compassion. She saw Ned turn red and pale and look very wretched, and she knew him for the same lad who had many months before asked work in a tone that pleased her. She now went out at the back gate, and met him in the farm-yard. Ned at once owned, in answer to her enquiries, that Jane was his sister, and by this means learned much of her history. She had never settled well to her business from the day of her arrival, and had seemed far more bent on being admired than on discharging her duty. Her mistress was pleased

to observe, however, after a time, that she grew graver in her deportment, though she became more careless than ever about her work. It was true, she forgot everything that was said to her, and gave much trouble by her slovenliness; but she no longer smiled at compliments from the farm-servants, or acted the coquette in her necessary intercourse with them. Mrs. Dale thought her patience with the girl strangely rewarded when Jane came one day to give her warning that she wished to leave her present service at the earliest term. She would neither give a reason nor say where she meant to go. When the day arrived, she waited till her master went out, and then appeared, to bid her mistress farewell. In answer to repeated questions about where she was going, she at length sank down on a chair, sobbed convulsively, and owned that she had neither protection nor home in prospect; that she had been cruelly deceived, and that she meant to find some hiding-place where she might lie down and her shame die with her. It was some time before she would give any hint who it was that had deceived and who seduced her, and she never revealed his name; but Mrs. Dale believed it to be a pauper labourer who had disappeared a few days before, probably to avoid being obliged to marry Jane when their guilt should be discovered. On ascertaining that the girl had relations, Mrs. Dale recommended that she should go to her cousin Marshall, open her whole heart to her, and follow her advice as to what should next be done; but Jane's sobbings be-

came more violent than ever at this suggestion. "They will tear me to pieces!" she cried. "They will never put up with disgrace; and I am the first that has disgraced them. I can never look cousin Marshall in the face again!"—Neither would she go to the workhouse. She loathed the idea of Mrs. Wilkes as much as she dreaded that of cousin Marshall; and Mrs. Dale was much perplexed, not daring to keep her another day, and not choosing to turn her out wholly destitute. After a long conversation, which served to soften the poor girl's heart and win her confidence, Mrs. Dale proposed a plan which was adopted,—that she should write a letter to cousin Marshall, urging that what was done could not be undone, and that the most likely way to make Jane's penitence real and lasting was to look to her present safety instead of driving her to desperation. Mrs. Dale expressed in very strong terms her concern that the respectability of the family should have been thus stained; and took the liberty of declaring her admiration of the parental kindness with which the poor orphans had been treated, and her earnest wishes that it might be better rewarded in the instance of the others than in that of poor Jane. With this letter in her hand, Jane was put into the carrier's cart, leaving as a last request to Ned that he would not follow her or give up his place on her account; and, partly for his sake, she promised that no persuasion should prevent her going straight to her cousin Marshall's and following the advice of her

friends in every particular: Mrs. Dale had since ascertained that she was received at her cousin's; and had remained in their house up to the last market-day, when the inquiry was made; but the farmer's wife did not know what sad circumstances the family were in when Jane arrived to add to their sorrow.

John Marshall had died after a few days' illness; and it was on the very night of his funeral that Jane alighted at his widow's door. Her first feeling on hearing of the event was joy that one person the less,—and he one whom she much respected,—would know of her disgrace. The next moment she felt what a wretch she must be,—what a state she must be reduced to,—to rejoice in the death of one who had been like a parent in tenderness, where no parental duty enjoined the acts of kindness he had done. She hastily bade Ann not tell her cousin of her arrival, and said she would beg a shelter for the night at her aunt Bell's; but she was told that aunt Bell was in great distress too, and could not possibly receive her; so there was no escape, and Jane was led in, trembling like a criminal under sentence, and pulling her cloak about her, to meet the kind-hearted cousin who had never frowned upon her. Her agitation was naturally misunderstood at first; but, after some time, her refusal even to look up, and the force with which she prevented their relieving her of her cloak made her cousin suspect the fact, and dismiss the young people, in order to arrive at an explanation.—She could not read the letter, and

Jane would not hear of Ann being called in to do it, but made an effort to get through it herself. Cousin Marshall said nothing for some time; not even the thought which was uppermost in her mind,—how glad she was that the fact never reached her husband's ear! At last, she merely assured Jane that she should be taken care of, and advised her to go to bed, and leave everything to be settled when there had been more time for thought.

"I cannot go," said Jane, "I will not leave you while you look so cold upon me, cousin."

"I will go with you, then," said Mrs. Marshall calmly. "We must have the same bed, and I am ready."

"You said you forgave me," cried the weeping Jane; "and I am sure this is not forgiving me. I never saw you look so upon anybody!"

"I never had reason, Jane; nobody belonging to me ever had to make such a confession as yours to-night. I pity you enough, God knows! for you must be very miserable; but I cannot look upon you as I do upon your innocent sisters; how should I?—Poor Sally! I remember her great comfort about being blind was that it was not Ann; and if you have any comfort at all, I suppose it must be that."

"Indeed, indeed, I had rather be anybody than what I am. I had rather be drowning this minute, or even on the gallows: I had rather die any how than be as I am. I hope I shall die when my time comes."

Cousin Marshall quietly represented the sin-

fulness of this thought, and Jane tempted her to say more and more, being able to bear anything better than the silence of displeasure. What, her cousin asked, could bring her to this pass? What madness could make her plunge herself into this abyss of distress after all the warning and watching, all the——But it was foolish to say more, Mrs. Marshall continued, when she might be led to say what would do no good and would be therefore unkind.

Jane would not let it drop. She laid much of the blame on the workhouse, where it was a common boast among the women how early they had got married, being so far better off than honester people that they need not trouble themselves about what became of themselves and their children, since the parish was bound to find them. It was considered a kind of enterprise among the paupers to cheat their superiors, and to get the girls early married by rendering marriage desirable on the score of decency, and of the chance of a man being able to support his children hereafter. Jane's leading idea was the glory of getting married at sixteen; and the last thing she thought of was the possibility of being deceived; and now that her intended husband was gone nobody knew whither, she was as much astonished and terrified at her own position as any of her friends could be. This explanation caused some inward relentings towards her; but cousin Marshall thought it too early yet to show them; and to avoid the danger of doing so, invited on both going to bed, where neither of

them slept a wink or exchanged a word during the whole night.

Before morning, Mrs. Marshall had arranged her plan. Jane's arrival was on no account to be mentioned, and she was to be kept entirely out of sight for the three months which were to pass before her confinement. By these means, the persecution of parish officers might be avoided, and an opportunity afforded for observing whether the shock had really so sobered Jane as to render her more fit to take care of herself than she was before. If she appeared truly penitent, Mrs. Marshall would try to obtain a service for her at some distance, where her disgrace would not follow her, and would also take charge of the infant, with such help as Jane could spare out of her wages; and then the parish need never know anything about the matter. Jane was most happy to agree to these terms, and settled herself in this bedroom for three long months, intending to work diligently for her infant, and to take all the needle-work of the family off her cousin's hands, with as much of the charge of the children as was possible within so confined a space. What more she wanted of exercise was to be taken with Mrs. Marshall very early in these spring mornings, before their neighbours should be stirring. The young people were so trained to obedience, that there was no fear of their telling anything that they were desired to keep to themselves.

Things went on as quietly as could be looked for in such unhappy circumstances. No difficul-

ties arose for some time, and Jane had only to struggle with her inward shame, her grief at witnessing Ann's sorrow, her terror at the risks which must be daily run, and her inability to get rest of body or mind. She could scarcely be persuaded to come down in the evening when the door was shut and the window curtain drawn: she started at every noise, and could not get rid of a vague expectation that her lover would find her out and come to comfort her;—an expectation which made her turn pale whenever she heard a man's voice under the window, or a tap at the door below. Besides these fears, circumstances happened now and then to try her to the utmost.

Early one morning, before Jane was up, and while Mrs. Marshall and her young people were dressing, a step was heard slowly ascending the stairs, the door opened, and Sally appeared with a smiling countenance and the question,

“Are you awake yet, cousin Marshall, and all of you?”

Mrs. Marshall made a sign to the children by putting her finger on her lip, and pointing to Jane. She had no intention that Sally should be made unhappy by knowing the truth at present, and was besides afraid to trust her with such a secret among her companions at the Asylum, who were all accustomed to have no concealments from one another.

“Why don't you answer?” said Sally, groping for the bed. “I do believe you are all asleep, though I thought I heard you moving, and the door was on the latch below.”

"We are all awake, my dear, and one or two gone out; but we are surprised to see you so early. What brings you at such a time, and who came with you?"

Sally explained that the ward of the Asylum in which she worked was to be whitewashed this day; and she and a few others whose friends lived near had leave to enjoy a long holiday. Three of them had taken care of one another, the streets being clear at this hour; and she had found her way easily for the short distance she had to come alone. While she spoke, Jane was gazing at her, tearful, and longing to throw herself on her sister's neck. The temptation became almost irresistible when Sally, feeling for a place on which to sit down, moved herself within reach.

"Take care where you sit, my dear," said Mrs. Marshall. "Here, I will give you a seat on my chest."

This chest was directly opposite the bed, so that Jane could see the face under the black bonnet, and convince herself that the old womanish little figure in brown stuff gown and white kerchief was really the sister Sally she had last seen in blue frock and pinafore. During the whole day, Jane sat on the stairs behind the half-shut door, listening to Sally's cheerful tales about the doings at the Asylum, and to her frequent inquiries about both her sisters, and trembling when any of the little ones spoke, lest they should reveal her presence. Many perplexing and dangerous questions too were asked.

“ Which of you sighs so? I should not ask if it could be you, cousin ; but it comes from the other side.”

Again, when Jane’s dinner was being carried to her.

“ Ah, we are not allowed to move at dinner-time, happen what will : and you used not to let us either ; and now Ann has gone upstairs twice since we sat down.” Again,

“ I have leave to knit what I please on Saturdays ; so I am knitting a pair of mittens for Jane, against she comes to see me, which I hope she will one day ; but be sure you none of you tell her about the mittens. I spoiled two pair in trying, and she would be so sorry to know how I wasted my time and the cotton.”

“ Poor dear !” said Mrs. Marshall at night, when Sally was gone ; “ it seems wicked to take advantage of her infirmity to deceive her ; but it is all for her good, placed where she is by her blindness. It would be far more cruel to tell her all, when it may be that she need never know it.”

Jane took all this upon herself ; but, while she blamed herself for having caused this new practice of concealment, she was far more grieved at it in John Marshall’s case. She did not strictly owe any confidence to Sally, but she did to John Marshall ; and the idea that he had left her the same blessing with the rest of her family when he died, gave her far more pain than any tears or reproaches from Sally could ever do.

One Sunday, when cousin Marshall had gone

to church in the morning with her family, and left her house apparently shut up, as usual; and when, moreover, it was so fine a day as to have taken almost all the neighbours from their homes, Jane came down to prepare the dinner, feeling quite secure from interruption. She was standing kneading the dumplings, when a noise was heard outside, and she had but a moment's time to escape upstairs before her aunt Bell lifted the latch and entered. Seeing the dough on the board and nobody there to knead it, she naturally proceeded to the bedroom, where she found Jane on the bed with coverings thrown over her. Questions and explanations followed.—How long had Jane been unwell, and did she expect to go back to her place when recovered? Why did she not let her aunt know of her arrival? though, to be sure, there was no use in expecting help from her, distressed as she was. Jane was really glad to turn the conversation away from her own troubles to those of Mrs. Bell, who was, as she herself said, as good as a widow, her husband having absconded. Dear! had not Jane heard of it? He had been advertised by the overseers in the newspapers, and a great fuss had been made about it; but, for her part, she was convinced it was the best thing he could do for her and the children, to go and find a settlement in a distant parish, leaving his family to be provided for by his own. Where had he gone?—Why, supposing she knew, was it likely she should tell before the year was out? However, he had made all safe by not giving a hint in

which direction he should travel. Jane asked what was the necessity of keeping the secret for a year? He would surely be out of reach before the year was over, if at all. Mrs. Bell laughed and said she saw Jane did not know how to get a settlement; and explained to her that her husband's aim was to obtain a claim on a distant and prosperous parish, which must be done either by living forty days on an estate of his own, worth thirty pounds, or in a rented tenement of the yearly value of ten pounds, or by serving an apprenticeship, or by going through a year's service on a yearly hiring as an unmarried man. This last was, of course, the only means within his power; and to make sure of it, it was his part to keep to himself whence he had come, and that he had a wife and family; and her's to remain ignorant whither he had gone, and not to inquire for her husband for a year at least.

"Do you call this a cheat, my dear?" she went on. "Lord! what a tender conscience you have! It is no worse than what is done every day. Would you think it such a very wicked thing now,—suppose a young creature like you should have happened to have a misfortune, and should wish her infant to have a settlement in a particular parish,—would you think it such a very wicked thing to hide yourself and keep your condition a secret from the officers till your child was born?" And Mrs. Bell looked inquisitively in her niece's face.

"That would be telling no lie," replied Jane, her face making the confession which she kept her tongue from uttering.

“ Well ; and whose fault is it, my dear, that lies are told about the matter ? If the laws put such difficulty in the day of getting relief, we are driven to tell fibs ; for relief we must have.”

Mrs. Marshall, who had overheard some of the conversation, and now came to Jane’s assistance, observed that the fault seemed to her to be in the laws giving relief at all. Mischiefs out of number came of it, and no good that she saw. The more relief the law gave, the more it might give, to judge by the swarms of paupers ; and all this made it the more difficult for honest and independent folks to get their bread. She thought her own experience, and Mrs. Bell’s together, might be enough to show how bad the system was.

“ Mine, I grant you,” cried Mrs. Bell ; “ but what have you had to do with it ? You, that pride yourself on never having touched a penny of parish money.”

“ Thanks, under God, to my husband, cousin Bell, we have been beholden to nobody but ourselves for our living. We have never had to bear the scornful glance from the rate-payers, nor the caprice of the overseer, nor any of the uncertainty of depending on what might fail us, nor the shame of calling our children paupers.— I say these things freely, cousin Bell, because I know you have been too long used to them to mind them.—We have never crossed the threshold of the workhouse on our own account ; nor ever been driven to expose our want when it was the greatest ; or tempted to fib by word :

or act to get more than our share of other people's money. Yet, the worst things we have suffered have arisen out of these poor laws; and the worst thing about them is, that those suffer by them who desire to have nothing to do with them. They prevent people going where their labour is wanted, and would be well paid, and keep them in a place where there are far more hands than there is work for. Honest, hard-working men, like my husband, have always felt the hardship of either being obliged to stay where wages were low from the number of labourers, or to give up their settlements for the chance of work in some other place."

"He had better have run off by himself, and left his settlement to you and the children," observed Mrs. Bell.

"John Marshall was not the man to do that, cousin. But, as I was saying, many a time when we were brought very low, so much so that my husband had not had his pint, nor the children anything but bread for a week, and less of that than they could have eaten,—at many such times we have been told of this parish and that parish where there was plenty of work and good wages, and have had half a mind to go and try our fortune; but we always remembered that so many more needy people would be likely to do the same, that it would soon cease to be a good parish, and we might have left a place where we were known and respected, for what would prove to be no good. I have heard that these favourite parishes are seldom long pros-

perous under the best management, for paupers contrive, by all sorts of tricks, to get a settlement in them."

"Well; that makes an end, however, of your complaint of there not being labour where labour is wanted."

"Indeed it does not, cousin Bell; for they are mostly idle men and cheats that wander about making experiments on such places. Sober, good labourers, would be much more ready to go where they are wanted, if it were not for the fear of losing their settlements. Such end, as my husband did, by staying in their own parish to have their labour poorly paid, and to see rogues and vagabonds consuming what would have added to their wages, if labour had been left to earn its due reward."

Mrs. Bell did not care about all this; all she knew was that people must live, and that she and her family could not have lived without the parish, and a deal of help besides.

"The very thing I complain of most, cousin Bell, is, that those who have the relief are those that know and care the least about the matter. It is they that are above taking the relief that have good reason to know, and much cause to care, that their labour cannot be properly paid, and that their children cannot have a fair chance in the world, while the money that should pay their wages is spent without bringing any more gain than if it was thrown into the sea. It is because such as you, cousin Bell, care about nothing but getting relief, that such husbands as

mine lose their natural rest through anxiety, and pinch themselves and work themselves into their graves, and die, not knowing but their families may come to be paupers after all.—I am warm, cousin, but you'll excuse me; nothing chafes me so easily as thinking of this; the more from remembering nearly the last words my husband spoke. 'I hope,' says he,—but I thought there was little hope in his tone, or in his face,—'I hope you and yours will be able to keep free of the parish. Get the boys into my club, if they live to be old enough; and then they will keep their mother and sisters free of the parish.'—I thank God! we can get on at present; but I sometimes think some of us will end our days in the workhouse, if idle and needy people go on to increase as they do, and to eat up the substance they never helped, as we have done, to make."

"It will be some time yet, cousin Marshall, before your boys can belong to the club."

"Yes; but in the meanwhile there is the Savings Bank, where the girls can put their little savings as well as the boys. Not that they have done anything in that way yet, except my eldest and Ann. But the others are earning their own clothes."

Mrs. Bell asked Jane whether it was not a nice thing for her sister Ann to have a little money in the bank ready for such occasions as Jane's present illness? She supposed Jane was now using it up; and to be sure it was a charming thing to have such help at hand. Mrs. Marshall, who knew that one of Jane's griefs was

depriving Ann of her little store, saved her the pain of replying by inviting Mrs. Bell down to dinner.

At the close of the meal, Mrs. Bell cast a longing eye on the few fragments she had left. Her children had only a crust of bread to eat this day ; and she complained much of the hardships they were reduced to, showing how her only gown was wearing out, and relating that it was ruinous work to do as she was doing now, pawning her blanket in the morning to release her gown, and the gown in the evening to release the blanket. Cousin Marshall was grieved for the children, but, charitable as she was known to be, she offered no help. She had nothing to spare, and had done her utmost in giving a hearty dinner ; and, if she had had the means, she would have bestowed them where they might have afforded real relief, which no charity ever did to Mrs. Bell.

This woman seldom visited her neighbours without leaving them cause to wish that she had stayed way. This was the case in the present instance. She whispered her suspicions of Jane's situation, either to the parish officers, or to some one who carried it round to them ; and the consequence was that the poor girl was hunted up, taken before a magistrate to be sworn, and removed to the workhouse to abide her confinement. In return to her bitter reproaches the next time they met, Mrs. Bell laughed, and said she thought she had done them all a great kindness.—Cousin Marshall ought to be very

glad to be relieved of the charge, and Jane would be sure of a husband if her lover could be found up. Jane's views had, however, been altered by her intercourse with Mrs. Marshall. She would much rather have gone to service and tried to atone for what was done, than remain to be the pauper-wife of a man who had cruelly deceived her,—who would not marry unless he could be caught,—and who, being an unwilling, would be probably an unkind, husband. Her good cousin feared something worse for her than the misery of her lot: she feared that this misery might drive her to habitual vice; and that her re-entrance into the workhouse might prove the date from which she would become a castaway from her family for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT IS CHARITY?

NED heard of Jane's return to the workhouse, and of her confinement, from Mr. Burke, who attended Mr. Effingham's family, and who recognized, to his great surprise, Ned Bridgeman in the boy who one day opened the gate for him, and followed to hold his horse. Whenever he came, from that time forward, he inquired for Ned, and was ready to make the wished-for reply to the customary petition, not to tell the officers or

anybody belonging to them, where he was, but just to inform cousin Marshall and his sisters that he was well, and likely to go on earning a living. It was in vain to reason with him, that the parish could desire nothing more than that he should maintain himself, and that the officers would be glad to leave him unmolested. He had eloped, and was possessed with the idea that he should be carried back whence he came; and had, moreover, such a horror of the place and people connected with his short period of pauperism, that he longed above all things to keep out of sight of the one, and be forgotten by the other. The pauper labourers who worked with him in the field, discovered something of this, and amused themselves by alarming him with dark hints, from time to time, that some danger impended. They were not over-fond of him, harmless and good-natured as he was. The bailiff was apt to hold him up as an example to them in an injudicious way, and Ned's horror of pauperism,—his pride, as his companions called it,—was not exactly the quality to secure their good fellowship. They teased the boy sadly, and Mr. Burke thought he looked more and more grave every time he saw him. The gentleman was not, therefore, much surprised when he was told one day that Ned was missing, nor did he give much heed to the remarks on the unsteadiness of the boy who had twice absconded. On finding that, so far from having done anything dishonest, Ned had left nearly half-a-crown of his savings in Mr. Effingham's hands, Mr.

Burke made inquiry into the circumstances, and found that, as he suspected, Ned had been assured that the officers were after him, and so cruelly taunted with his sister's shame, that it was no wonder he had gone farther up the country, where he might work in peace, if work was to be found.. Nothing could be done but to take charge of his money, and invest it where it might increase till the owner should be forthcoming to claim it. So Mr. Burke pocketed the two shillings and fourpence half-penny as carefully as if it had been a hundred pounds, and saw that it was placed in the Savings Bank with Ann's, and made as light as he could to the family of the fact that he no longer knew where the lad was; adding that Ned was a boy whom he would trust all over the world by himself, and prophesying that he would re-appear some day to be a credit and a help to his orphan sisters.

On one occasion when Mr. Burke was entering the village of Titford, he overtook Mr. Effingham walking slowly with his head bent down, and his hands in his pockets. He looked up when greeted by his friend, who accosted him with—

“I am afraid you are to be one of my patients to-day, to judge by your gait and countenance. What can be the matter? No misfortune at home, I hope?”

“No; but I have just heard something that has shocked me very much. There is an execution at Dale's.”

“How hard that poor man has struggled!”

observed Mr. Burke. "And has it even come to this at last?"

"Even so; and through no fault of his own that I can see. They are distraining for the rate."

"Ay, that is the way, Effingham. Thus is our pauper list swelled, year by year. It grows at both ends. Paupers multiply their own numbers as fast as they can, and rate-payers sink down into rate-receivers. This will probably be Dale's fate, as it has been that of many little farmers before him. And if it is, he will only anticipate by a few years the fate of others besides small farmers, of shopkeepers, manufacturers, merchants, and agriculturists of every class; always providing that some radical amendment of the system does not take place."

"God help us!" cried Effingham. "If so, our security is gone, as a nation, and as individuals."

"At present, Effingham, the security of property is to the pauper, and not to the proprietor, however rich he may be. The proprietor is compelled, as in the case before us, to pay more and more to the rate till his profits are absorbed, and he is obliged to relinquish his undertakings one after another; field after field goes out of cultivation, his capital is gradually transferred to his wages-fund, which is paid away without bringing an adequate return; and when all but his fixed capital is gone, that becomes liable to seizure, and the ruin is complete. There is no more security of property, under such a system,

than there is security of life to a poor wretch in a quicksand, who feels himself swallowed up inch by inch. The paupers meanwhile are sure of their relief as long as the law subsists. They are to be provided for at all events, let what will become of other people. While Dale has been fretting by day, and tossing by night under the burden of his cares, his pauper labourers have been supporting a very different kind of burden, —the burden of the pauper song,

‘ Hang sorrow and cast away care,
The parish is bound to find us!’ ”

“ This very security of property, which is the most precious of an independent man’s rights,” said Effingham, “ seems to be the most pernicious thing in the world to the indigent. One may fairly call it so in relation to them, for they seem to consider the produce of the rate as their property.”

“ It is really so,” replied Burke. “ They know it to be the lawful property of the pauper body, and that the only question is how it is to be distributed? As long as they know this, they will go on multiplying the claims upon it till nothing is left with which to satisfy them.”

“ It is very odd,” said Effingham, “ that none of the checks that have ever been tried have done any good; they seem rather to have made the matter worse.”

“ I do not think it strange, Effingham. None of the remedies have struck at the root of the evil, and none could therefore effect lasting good. The test is just this: do they tend to lessen the

number of the indigent? Unless they do this, they may afford relief to a generation, or shift a burden from one district to another, or from one class of producers upon another; but they will not improve the system. Look at the experiments tried! First, paupers were to wear a badge, a mark of infamy. Of course, the profligate and hardened were the readiest to put it on, and those who had modesty and humble pride refused it, and obtained help only through the compassion of overseers, who evaded the regulation so perpetually, that it was abolished as useless. While it lasted, profligate pauperism increased very rapidly. Next came the expedient of workhouses, in which the poor were expected to do more work, and be fed less expensively, than in their own houses. But here again the rogue and vagabond class reaped the advantage, the houses being detested by the sober and quiet; and the choice of the latter to pine at home, rather than be shut up in a workhouse, occasioned a diminution of the rate for some time; but that time has long been over, and now the maintenance of a pauper costs three or four times as much in a workhouse as out of it, there being no inducement to the paupers to work, and but little to their managers to economise. And this is just what any one might have foretold from the beginning, if he had seen what experience has plainly taught us, that indigence must spread while numbers increase, and while the subsistence-fund, on which they are to be supported, is consumed unproductively."

“ But why unproductively ? ” said Effingham. “ I cannot help thinking that there must be some mode of management, by which manufactures might be carried on by paupers with pretty good success.”

“ Suppose it to be so, according to what I imagine you to mean by success,—suppose a certain quantity of produce to be achieved and disposed of,—this is in itself a great evil. Capital raised by forcible means, arbitrarily applied, and made to bring a return from an artificial market, can never be so productive as if it found a natural channel; and its employment in this artificial manner is a serious injury to individual capitalists. In the neighbourhood of a workhouse where work is really done a manufacturer, while paying to the rate, bitterly feels that he is subscribing the means by which his trade is to be stolen from him. It is adding insult to injury to set up in the faces of rate-payers workhouse manufactures, which are to have a preference in the market to their own. In all these cases, however, the object fails. To all remedies yet tried, the same fundamental objection applies: they all encourage the increase of population, while they sink capital. What we want is the very reverse of this,—we want a reproduction of capital with increase, and a limitation of numbers within a due proportion to this fund.”

“ What do you think, then, of the methods proposed for the amelioration of the system ? ”

“ Which ? There are so many.”

“ The cottage system, for one.”

"It will not bear the test. Under no system does population increase more rapidly;—witness Ireland; and in addition to the worst evils that afflict Ireland, we should have that of a legal claim to support, which effectually prevents the due improvement of capital. Cottages would prove no better than workhouses, depend upon it."

"Well, then, what do you think of assessing new kinds of property?"

"Worse and worse! This would be only casting more of our substance into the gulf before its time. It would be helping to increase the number of paupers; it would be encouraging the unproductive consumption of capital; it would be——"

"Like pouring water into one of your dropsical patients," said Effingham, smiling.

"Just so, Effingham; and it needs no great skill to foresee the result in both cases."

"Then there are Benefit Clubs," replied Effingham. "Some think that if they were made obligatory by law, they might soon supersede the poor-rate. What do you think of them?"

"No man approves such societies more than I, as long as they are voluntary; but fellowship of this kind would lose its virtue, I doubt, by being made compulsory. There are no means that I know of, of compelling a man who will not earn to store his earnings; and the frugal and industrious will do it without compulsion, as soon as they understand the matter: so that in fact the worst classes of society would be left as free to

roam, and beg, and steal, as if the institution did not exist."

"But Friendly Societies and Benefit Clubs will bear your test. They tend to the increase of capital, and, by encouraging prudence, to the limitation of numbers."

"True; and therefore I wish they were in universal operation among the working classes; but this must be by voluntary association. It will be a work of time to convince our whole population of their advantages; and even then the less industrious part will rather depend on the poor rate, if it still subsists. We must have recourse to some speedier method of lessening our burdens, giving all possible encouragement to Friendly Societies in the mean time."

"What method? It seems to me that relief is already given in every possible way."

"Ay; there is the mistake, Effingham. People think they give relief in giving money."

"I seldom give money," replied Effingham.

"No; but you give what money will buy, which is, begging your pardon, worse than ineffectual. Now, if you have no objection, I should like to know how much you spent on coals and blankets the first Christmas you settled here, and how much last year?"

"I began with devoting five pounds a year to this purpose; but it increased sadly. I stopped short two years ago at twenty pounds; but it grieved me to the heart to do so, for more objects remain now unsupplied than I supplied at first."

“ Probably; and are these new applicants strangers from other parishes brought round you by your bounty, or are more of your near neighbours in a condition for receiving charity?”

“ Dale reproaches me with having brought an inundation of paupers from a distance; but really our own population has increased wonderfully.”

“ And the more support you offer them, friend, the more surprisingly they will increase, if there can be anything surprising in the case. Surely you do not mean to go on giving coals and blankets?”

“ What can I do? You would call me cruel to withdraw the gift, if you could see the destitution of the poor creatures. I am completely at a loss how to proceed. If I go on, poverty increases; if I stop, the people will freeze and pine before my eyes. What a dilemma!”

“ Much like that of government about its pauper subjects. I should recommend the same method to both.”

“ To fix a maximum, I suppose; to declare the amount beyond which relief shall not be given? I have tried that, and it does not succeed. Twenty pounds a year is my maximum, and is known to be so; but every one hopes to have a portion of it, and reckons upon his share nearly as confidently as if all were sure of it.”

“ Of course; and there is the additional evil of admitting the principle of a claim to support, which is at the bottom of the mischief.—No; to fix a maximum is to unite the evils of the maintenance and the abolition of the pauper system; and both are bad enough singly. If I

were you, and if I were the government, I would immediately disavow the principle in question, and take measures for ceasing to act upon it. If I were you, I would explain to my neighbours that, finding this mode of charity create more misery than it relieves, I should discontinue it in the way which appears to inflict the least hardship. I would give notice that, after the next Christmas donation, no more coals and blankets shall be given except to those aged and sickly people who at present look for them; and that no new applicants whatever shall be placed on the list, the object being to have the charity die out as soon as possible."

"But I shall be railed at wherever I turn my face. I should not wonder if they pull my house about my ears. They will rob my poultry-yard, and burn my ricks. They will——"

"Very like the situation of government!" exclaimed Mr. Burke. "The very same difficulties on a smaller scale. Friend, you must bear the railing for a time, since it comes as a natural consequence of what you have already done. I am sure so benevolent a man as you would rather endure this personal inconvenience than add to the misery around you. You are capable of heroism in retrieving a mistake, Effingham. As for your house and other property, you must take measures to protect it. You must firmly and gently repress tendencies to violence which arise, as you now perceive, from an error of your own."

"I will consider, resolve, and act; and that

without delay, for the evil is pressing," said Effingham.

"I wish government would do the same," replied Mr. Burke. "We hear much of consideration, but the resolve is yet to be made; and how long the act may be in following, it is impossible to guess. Meanwhile, we are going headlong to ruin as fast as you would do if you answered all the petitions for charity which would be brought upon you by unbounded readiness to give. Your private fortune would be gone in a twinkling, and so will vanish our national resources."

"What period would you fix for abolishing the rate?"

"The best plan, in my opinion, yet proposed, is this:—to enact that no child born from any marriage taking place within a year from the date of the law, and no illegitimate child born within two years from the same date, shall ever be entitled to parish assistance. This regulation should be made known, and its purpose explained universally; and this, if properly done, might, I think, prevent violence, and save a vast amount of future distress. The people should be called together, either in their places of worship or elsewhere, in such a manner as to attract the whole population to listen, and the case should be explained to them by their pastors or others. It is so plain a case, and so capable of illustration, that I see no great difficulty in making the most ignorant comprehend it."

"And yet the details are vast."

“Vast, but not complicated; so the whole might be conveyed in a parable which any child can understand. I think I dare undertake to prove to any rational being that national distress *cannot* be relieved by money, and that consequently individual distress cannot be so relieved without inflicting the same portion of distress elsewhere. A child can see that if there is so much bread in a country and no more, and if the rich give some of the poor two shillings a day that they may eat more bread, the price of bread will rise, and some who could buy before must go without now. Since no more bread is created by this charity, the only thing done is to take some of it out of the reach of purchasers to give it to paupers.”

“True: the only real charity is to create more bread; and, till this can be done, to teach men to be frugal of what they have.—I happen to know a case which illustrates your doctrine. Owen, who lives in this village, earned ten shillings a week before the last scarcity. He bought eight shillings’ worth of flour for his family, and had two to spare for other necessities. During the scarcity he received fourteen shillings a week from his parish, in addition to the ten he earned; but the price of corn had risen so much that he now gave twenty-two shillings out of his twenty-four for the same quantity of flour; so that he had still two shillings left for other necessities; and thus was no richer with twenty-four shillings than he had been with ten.”

“If there had been many such cases,” observed Mr. Burke, “the price of corn would have been even higher than it was. The best charity to the public as well as to this man would have been to teach him that he had better look after other kinds of food, and not insist on such an abundance of flour. Do not you think he could have understood this? and if he could, why should not his brethren understand the state of the pauper system, and be brought to acquiesce in the measures now necessary to be taken?—If the regulation I have described had been made when first proposed, there would have been much less difficulty than now. If not done now, there is no saying how soon it may be out of our power to do anything. We are now borne down, we shall soon be crushed, by the weight of our burdens.”

“We must hasten to give our testimony,” said Effingham: “I, by withdrawing my donations, and declaring why; you, by—but you have given yours, I suspect. I see now the reasons of your resigning your offices at both the charitable institutions where I and others took so much pains to get you in. I was more than half angry at it when I thought of our canvass, and all the disagreeablenesses belonging to it;—and all done and endured for nothing. But I see now how it is. I can only hope that your going out of office may do more good than your going in; and what more can I say?”

“Nothing more gratifying to my self-complacency, I am sure,” said Mr. Burke, smiling,

"I have had my recompense already in finding that many more than I expected attend to my reasons, and take them into consideration as a matter of real importance. My hopes sometimes mount so high as to flatter me that all Great Britain may soon be effectually employed upon the problem—**HOW TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF THE INDIGENT.**"

CHAPTER IX.

COUSIN MARSHALL'S END.

It was some years before any tidings came of Ned that could be depended upon. At length a countryman called on the widow Marshall one market-day, saying that he had had a world of trouble in finding her out in the small place she had got into outside the city, but was determined not to meet Ned Bridgeman again without having seen her and delivered Ned's packet into her own hand. Mrs. Marshall had nobody living with her now but her youngest daughter, who happened not to be at home at this hour; and as Mrs. Marshall could not read, she was obliged to wait till evening to know what was in the letter, and what the guinea was for which the packet contained. She obtained great satisfaction from the countrymen concerning Ned, sent him her love and blessing, and the promise

of an answer to his letter when there should be an opportunity of sending one, which might happen by means of the present messenger within six months. Many times before the evening did cousin Marshall open the letter, and examine it, and admire as much of it as was apparent to her; viz. the evenness of the lines and the absence of blots. The guinea, too, was a very good sign. The letter proved that his workhouse schooling had not been lost upon him; and the money, that her methods of education had taken effect. Her answer, written down by her daughter, was as follows:—

“ Dear Ned,

“ Your letter was very welcome to us, since you could not come yourself. I do not wonder you met with hardships and difficulty in settling. Such is the way with many people in these days who wish to be beholden to nobody; but such generally meet with their deserts at last, as I am glad to hear you have. We have put your guinea into the Savings Bank for you, my dear boy, as, thank God! we none of us want it at present, and there was half-a-guinea of yours there before. Now I dare say you are wondering how it came there? It is the half-crown of wages you left behind you at Titford that Mr. Burke took care of, and it has grown into half-a-guinea by not being touched, which I hope will be good news to you. I quite approve your wish about the Friendly Society, knowing how my husband did the wisest thing in belonging to

one, and at times could have got through in no other way. There is nothing about your sisters that should give you any scruple. Sally, poor thing, is very contented in the Asylum ; and, as the people there are fond of her, has fewer troubles than many that have their eyesight. I have not seen so many tears from her since she went in as when my Susan read your letter to her, and she sends you her love. Ann is pretty well off in service, having nothing to complain of but her mistress's temper, with which she will contrive to bear, I hope, for she has a sweet one of her own. She will write to you herself, and tell you as much as we know about Jane, which is but little, and that little very sad. She is quite lost, I fear ; but you may depend on my keeping my eye upon her. I thank you, my dear boy, for your questions about me and mine. My children have all left me but the one that holds the pen, and she is going to marry too. I hope she will have an easier life than her sisters, who are much put to it with their large families. I begin to feel myself growing old when I see so many grandchildren about me ; and perhaps it is owing to that that I feel far more troubled about how their parents are to get through than I ever did for John Marshall and myself, when we had another little family added, as it were, to our own eight. But God preserve me from failing in my trust !—trusting as I wish to do, not to other people's charity, but to one's own labour and thrift, which has His blessing sooner than the other. Many a merciful lesson

has been given me about trusting,—one since I had your letter. On Saturday, my eldest grandson and daughter were both out of work. To-day is Monday, and they have each got a place. Indeed God Almighty is very good to us. But Susan is tired, not having kept up her schooling, I am afraid, so well as you. However, it looks a long letter, though I have many more things to say to you if you were here. Old as I call myself, I may see you on this side the grave, or will try to think so till you say not. Till then, I send you my love and blessing, which I hope you know you have had all this long while."

The close of cousin Marshall's very long life was not altogether so serene as the character of its days of vigour might seem to deserve. Her children were so burdened with families of their own that they could offer no further assistance than that she should lodge with them by turns. She was positive, however, in her determination to live alone; and a small room in a poor place on the outskirts of the city was her dwelling. In one way or another she earned a little matter; and lived upon it, to the astonishment of some who received twice as much from the parish and could not make it do. Her adopted children found the utmost difficulty in making her accept any assistance, clearly as it was her due from those to whom she had been a mother in their orphan state. It grieved Ned to the heart to see her using her dim sight to patch her cloak for the twentieth time, when he had placed at her

disposal the guinea and half, with all that had accumulated upon it, in the Savings Bank.

"Not yet. When I want it. I can do for myself still," were always her answers; and though, without consulting her, he laid in coals and bought clothes for her during the two only visits that he was able to make to that neighbourhood, and though these presents were, after some scruple, accepted, he never could prevail upon her to use the little fund during his absence for her daily comforts. She was somewhat unpopular among her neighbours, who did not relish her occasional observations on the multiplication of alehouses, or her reports of what a comely, robust man her John Marshall was, for all he had seldom a pint and pipe to refresh himself with when his day's work was done. Nobody was more openhearted and sociable; but he could not afford both ale and independence,—to say nothing of charity; and everybody knew he was a father to the orphan.—The neighbours observed that he was certainly very kind to the parish; but that, for their parts, they could not afford to give charity to the parish. It was more natural for the parish to give to them. Such degeneracy as this roused cousin Marshall to prophesy evil. She was rather too ready with her forebodings that those who thus spoke would die in the workhouse, and with her horror at the warning seeming to create no alarm. But what roused her indignation above everything was the frequent question how, after all her toils and savings, she was better off than her cousin, Mrs.

Bell? Mrs. Bell had never more heard of her husband, and had at length been taken into the workhouse with her family; of whom one daughter had followed Jane's example, and gained her point of a pauper marriage; one son was an ill-doing pauper-labourer; and another, having been transported for theft, was flourishing at Sydney, and likely to get more money than all cousin Marshall's honest children put together. Mrs. Bell was proud of this son's prosperity, and would not have been sorry to hear any day of the other getting transported in like manner.—Now and then it occurred to cousin Marshall that there was little use in answering those who could ask such a question as wherein she was better off than Mrs. Bell; but it oftener happened that her replies were given in a style of eloquence that did not increase her popularity.—Death came at last, in time to save her from the dependence she dreaded, though not from the apprehension of it. In crossing her threshold, one winter's day, with her apron full of sticks, she tripped and fell. She seemed to sustain no injury but the jar; but that was fatal. She survived just long enough to see the daughter who lived in the neighbourhood, and make a bequest of her Bible to one child, her bed to another, her few poor clothes to a third, pointing out the corner of her chest where was deposited the little hoard she had saved for her burial.

“God has been very good to me and mine,” she said. “They tell me I have not always said so; but I meant no mistrust. I may have

been too much in a hurry to go where 'the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest: ' but it is all right now that I am really going at last. Thank God! I can say to the last that He has been very good to me."

She left her blessing for every one by name, and died.

Mr. Burke met the funeral train coming out of the churchyard, and immediately knew Ned, long as it was since they had met.

"Your cousin Marshall's funeral!" he exclaimed. "My wife and Louisa and I inquired for her in vain, a long while ago, and supposed she had been dead some time. She must have been a great age."

"Eighty-one, sir."

In answer to Mr. Burke's inquiries how she had passed her latter days, and in opposition to Ned's affectionate report of her, a neighbour observed, with a shake of the head, that she was awfully forsaken at times.

"It was but the day before she died, sir, that she complained that the Almighty had forgotten her, and that she was tired of looking to be released."

Ned brushed his hand across his eyes as he observed that her neighbours were not capable of judging of such a woman as cousin Marshall, and not worthy to find fault with what she let fall in her dark moments.

"My wife said at the time, however," replied the man, "that it would be well if a judgment did not come upon her for such words; and,

sure enough, by the same hour the next day she was dead ; and not in a natural way either."

Mr. Burke smiled at Ned, who gravely observed that his cousin had lived too late to be done justice to. By what he had heard her tell, he judged that a hundred years ago she would have been honoured and tended in her old age, and saved all she had suffered from fear of the parish, and have had it told on her tombstone how many children she had bred up by her industry. It would not be difficult, for that matter, to put up a tombstone now ; but where would be the use of it, unless it was honored ? The want lay there.

" I hope," said Mr. Burke, " that we may as reasonably say that your cousin lived too early as that she lived too late. The time will come, trust me, when there will be end of the system under which she has suffered. It cannot always be that the law will snatch the bread from the industrious to give it to the idle, and turn labour from its natural channel, and defraud it of its due reward, and authorise the selfish and dissolute to mock at those who prize independence, and who bind themselves to self-denial that they may practise charity. The time will come, depend upon it, when the nation will effectually take to heart such injustice as this. There is much to undo, much to rectify, before the labours of the poor, in their prime, shall secure to them a serene old age ; but the time will come, though by that day yonder grave may be level with the turf beside it, and there may be none to remember or speak of Cousin Marshall."

Summary of Principles illustrated in this Volume.

IN a society composed of a natural gradation of ranks, some must be poor; *i. e.* have nothing more than the means of present subsistence.

Any suspension of these means of subsistence, whether through disaster, sickness, or decrepitude, converts the poor into the indigent.

Since indigence occasions misery, and disposes to vice, the welfare of society requires the greatest possible reduction of the number of the indigent.

Charity, public and private, or an arbitrary distribution of the subsistence-fund, has hitherto failed to effect this object; the proportion of the indigent to the rest of the population having increased from age to age.

This is not surprising, since an arbitrary distribution of the subsistence-fund, besides rendering consumption unproductive, and encouraging a multiplication of consumers, does not meet the difficulty arising from a disproportion of numbers to the means of subsistence.

The small unproductive consumption occasioned by the relief of sudden accidents and rare infirmities is necessary, and may be justifiably provided for by charity, since such charity does not tend to the increase of numbers; but, with this exception, all arbitrary distribution of the necessaries of life is injurious to society, whether in the form of private almsgiving, public charitable institutions, or a legal pauper-system.

The tendency of all such modes of distribution

having been found to be to encourage improvidence with all its attendant evils,—to injure the good while relieving the bad,—to extinguish the spirit of independence on one side,—and of charity on the other,—to encourage speculation, tyranny, and fraud,—and to increase perpetually the evil they are meant to remedy,—but one plea is now commonly urged in favour of a legal provision for the indigent.

This plea is that every individual born into a state has a right to subsistence from the state.

This plea, in its general application, is grounded on a false analogy between a state and its members, and a parent and his family.

A parent has a considerable influence over the subsistence-fund of his family, and an absolute control over the numbers to be supported by that fund; whereas the rulers of a state, from whom a legal provision emanates, have little influence over its subsistence-fund, and no control whatever over the number of its members.

If the plea of right to subsistence be grounded on the faults of national institutions, the right ought rather to be superseded by the rectification of those institutions, than admitted at the cost of perpetuating an institution more hurtful than all the others combined.

What, then, must be done to lessen the number of the indigent, now so frightfully increasing?

The subsistence-fund must be employed productively, and capital and labour be allowed to

take their natural course; *i. e.* the pauper system must, by some means or other, be extinguished.

The number of consumers must be proportioned to the subsistence-fund. To this end, all encouragements to the increase of population should be withdrawn, and every sanction given to the preventive check; *i. e.* charity must be directed to the enlightenment of the mind, instead of to the relief of bodily wants.

If not adopted speedily, all measures will be too late to prevent the universal prevalence of poverty in this kingdom, the legal provision for the indigent now operating the extinction of our national resources at a perpetually increasing rate.

